METHODS OF ETHICS

SIDGWICK

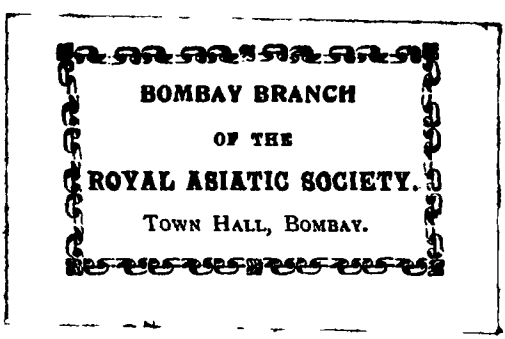
F
c
45a

00101372

170
Sid/Sup
10372

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.

BBRAS



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018

A SUPPLEMENT

TO THE FIRST EDITION

OF THE

METHODS OF ETHICS

101372

BY

HENRY SIDGWICK, M.A.,

PRÆLECTOR IN MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

CONTAINING ALL THE IMPORTANT ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS IN THE SECOND EDITION.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1877.

[*All Rights reserved.*]

Sid/sup
10/372

PREFACE.

In preparing the second edition of *The Methods of Ethics*, I found it desirable to make extensive alterations and additions; I have therefore thought it well to publish them here in a separate form, for the use of purchasers of my first edition. On one or two points I have to acknowledge a certain change of view; which is partly at least due to criticism. For instance, in ch. 4 of Bk. I. (on "Pleasure and Desire"), which has been a good deal criticised by Prof. Bain and others, although I still retain my former opinion on the psychological question at issue, I have been led to take a different view of the relation of this question to Ethics; and in fact § 1 of this chapter as it at present stands directly contradicts the corresponding passage in the former edition. So again, as regards the following chapter, on 'Free-Will,' though I have not exactly found that the comments which it has called forth have removed my difficulties in dealing with this time-honoured problem, I have become convinced that I ought not to have crudely obtruded these difficulties on the reader, while professedly excluding the consideration of them from my subject. In the present edition therefore I have carefully limited myself to

explaining and justifying the view that I take of the practical aspect of the question. I have further been led, through study of the Theory of Evolution in its application to practice, to attach somewhat more importance to this theory than I had previously done; and also in several passages of Bks. III. and IV. to substitute 'well-being' for 'happiness,' in my exposition of that implicit reference to some further end and standard which reflection on the Morality of Common Sense continually brings into view. This latter change however (as I explain in the concluding chapter of Book III.) is not ultimately found to have any practical effect. I have also modified my view of 'objective rightness,' as the reader will see by comparing Bk. I. c. 1, § 3 with the corresponding passage in the former edition; but here again the alteration has no material importance. In my exposition of the Utilitarian principle (Bk. IV. c. 1) I have shortened the cumbrous phrase 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' by omitting—as its author ultimately advised—the last four words. And finally, I have yielded as far as I could to the objections that have been strongly urged against the concluding chapter of the treatise. The main discussion therein contained still seems to me indispensable to the completeness of the work; but I have endeavoured to give the chapter a new aspect by altering its commencement, and omitting most of the concluding paragraph.

The greater part, however, of the new matter in this edition is merely explanatory and supplementary. I have endeavoured to give a fuller and clearer account of my views on any points on which I either have myself seen them to be ambiguously or inadequately

expressed, or have found by experience that they were liable to be misunderstood. Thus in Bk. I. c. 2, I have tried to furnish a rather more instructive account than my first edition contained of the mutual relations of Ethics and Politics. Again, even before the appearance of Mr Leslie Stephen's interesting review in *Fraser* (March, 1875), I had seen the desirability of explaining further my general view of the 'Practical Reason,' and of the fundamental notion signified by the terms 'right,' 'ought,' &c. With this object I have entirely rewritten c. 3 of Book I., and made considerable changes in c. 1. Elsewhere, as in cc. 6 and 9 of Book I., and c. 6 of Book II., I have altered chiefly in order to make my expositions more clear and symmetrical. This is partly the case with the considerable changes that I have made in the first three chapters of Book III.; but I have also tried to obviate the objections brought by Professor Calderwood[1] against the first of these chapters. The main part of this Book (cc. 4—12) has been but slightly altered; but in c. 13 (on 'Philosophical Intuitionism'), which has been suggestively criticized by more than one writer, I have thought it expedient to give a more direct statement of my own opinions; instead of confining myself (as I did in the first edition) to comments on those of other moralists. C. 14 again has been considerably modified; chiefly in order to introduce into it the substance of certain portions of an article on 'Hedonism and Ultimate Good,' which I published in *Mind* (No. v.). In Book IV. the changes (besides those above mentioned) have been inconsiderable; and have been chiefly made in order to remove a misconception which I shall presently notice, as to

[1] Cf. *Mind*, No. II.

my general attitude towards the three Methods which I am principally occupied in examining.

In revising my work, I have endeavoured to profit as much as possible by all the criticisms on it that have been brought to my notice, whether public or private[1]. I have frequently deferred to objections, even when they appeared to me unsound, if I thought I could avoid controversy by alterations to which I was myself indifferent. Where I have been unable to make the changes required, I have usually replied, in the text or the notes, to such criticisms as have appeared to me plausible, or in any way instructive. In so doing, I have sometimes referred by name to opponents, where I thought that, from their recognized position as teachers of the subject, this would give a distinct addition of interest to the discussion; but I have been careful to omit such reference where experience has shewn that it would be likely to cause offence. The book is already more controversial than I could wish; and I have therefore avoided encumbering it with any polemics of purely personal interest. For this reason I have generally left unnoticed such criticisms as have been due to mere misapprehensions, against which I thought I could effectually guard in the present edition. There is, however, one fundamental misunderstanding, on which it seems desirable to say a few words. I find that more than one critic has overlooked or disregarded the account of the plan of my treatise, given in the original preface and in § 5 of the introductory chapter: and has consequently supposed me to be writing as an assailant of two of the methods which I

[1] Among unpublished criticisms I ought especially to mention the valuable suggestions that I have received from Mr Carveth Read; to whose assistance in revising the present edition many of my corrections are due.

chiefly examine, and a defender of the third. Thus one of my reviewers seems to regard Book III. (on Intuitionism) as containing mere hostile criticism from the outside: another has constructed an article on the supposition that my principal object is the 'suppression of Egoism': a third has gone to the length of a pamphlet under the impression (apparently) that the 'main argument' of my treatise is a demonstration of Universalistic Hedonism. I am concerned to have caused so much misdirection of criticism: and I have carefully altered in this edition the passages which I perceive to have contributed to it. The Morality that I examine in Book III. is my own morality as much as it is any man's: it is, as I say, the 'Morality of Common Sense,' which I only attempt to represent in so far as I share it; I only place myself outside it either (1) temporarily, for the purpose of impartial criticism, or (2) in so far as I am forced beyond it by a practical consciousness of its incompleteness. I have certainly criticized this morality unsparingly: but I conceive myself to have exposed with equal unreserve the defects and difficulties of the hedonistic method (cf. especially cc. 3, 4 of Bk. II. and c. 5 of Bk. IV.). And as regards the two hedonistic principles, I do not hold the reasonableness of aiming at happiness generally with any stronger conviction than I do that of aiming at one's own. It was no part of my plan to call special attention to this "Dualism of the Practical Reason" as I have elsewhere called it: but I am surprised at the extent to which my view has perplexed even those of my critics who have understood it. I had imagined that they would readily trace it to the source from which I learnt it, Butler's well-known Sermons. I hold with Butler that "Reasonable Self-

love and Conscience are the two chief or superior principles in the nature of man," each of which we are under a "manifest obligation" to obey: and I do not (I believe) differ materially from Butler in my view either of reasonable self-love, or—theology apart—of its relation to conscience. Nor, again, do I differ from him in regarding conscience as essentially a function of the practical Reason: "moral precepts", he says in the *Analogy* (pt. ii. c. 8), "are precepts the reason of which we see." My difference only begins when I ask myself, 'What among the precepts of our common conscience do we really see to be ultimately reasonable?' a question which Butler does not seem to have seriously put, and to which, at any rate, he has given no satisfactory answer. The answer that I found to it supplied the rational basis that I had long perceived to be wanting to the Utilitarianism of Bentham, regarded as an ethical doctrine: and thus enabled me to transcend the commonly received antithesis between Intuitionists and Utilitarians.

I ought to say in conclusion that the matter contained in this Supplement is not entirely new; as in some cases it has been found more convenient to include some portion of the old, in order to make the new more readily intelligible. I have thought it sufficient to indicate the place of the longer passages by noting chapter and section: in the case of minor additions or alterations I have, wherever it seemed necessary, noted at the side the page of the first edition where the context is to be found.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

IN THE SECOND EDITION

OF

THE METHODS OF ETHICS.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. THE boundaries of the study called Ethics are variously and often vaguely conceived: but they will be sufficiently defined for the purposes of the present treatise if a 'Method of Ethics' is explained to mean any rational procedure by which we determine Right Conduct or Practice in any particular case. Of the two last terms 'Conduct' is preferable, as the Method of Right Practice would be more naturally understood as including Politics also[1].

Both Ethics and Politics are distinguished from positive sciences by having as their special and primary object to determine what ought to be, and not to ascertain what merely is.....

It is true that the mutual implication of the two kinds of study is, on any theory, very close and complete. Our

[1] I use 'Politics' in its widest signification, to denote the science of Right or Good Legislation and Government.

view of what ought to be is derived, in all details, from our apprehension of what is: and the means of realizing our ideal can only be thoroughly learnt by a careful study of actual phenomena. Still it is clear that at any moment the actions which we ought to do, or the results at which we ought to aim, cannot as such fall within the scope of any of the above-mentioned positive sciences.....

§ 2. In the language of the preceding section I could not avoid taking account of two different forms in which the fundamental problem of Ethics is stated; the difference between which leads, as we shall presently see, to rather important consequences. Ethics is sometimes considered as an investigation of the true Moral laws or rational Rules of Conduct; sometimes as an inquiry into the nature of the ultimate End of human action, anciently known as the Bonum, or Summum Bonum. Either view can be extended so as to comprehend the other: but the former seems most easily applicable to ethical systems generally. For the Good that we investigate in Ethics is limited to Practicable Good, as Aristotle says: we seek knowledge of the end in order to ascertain what actions are the right means to its attainment. Thus however prominent the notion of an Ultimate Good, other than voluntary action of any kind, may be in our Ethical System, and whatever interpretation we may give to this notion, we must still arrive finally, in our ethical conclusions, at the determination of Right or Reasonable rules of conduct.

On the other hand, the second view of Ethics is not naturally applicable to those systems which consider rightness of conduct to consist in conformity to absolute rules.....

It is on account of the prevalence of the view just described, and the prominent place which it consequently occupies in my discussion, that in defining the subject of the present treatise I have avoided the term 'Art of Conduct'; which, to some writers, will appear the more appropriate designation for ethical method as I conceive it.

For the term Art as properly used seems to signify systematic express knowledge (with or without the implicit knowledge or instinct, which we call skill) of the right means to a given end. Now if we assume that the rightness of action

depends on its conduciveness to some ulterior end, then no doubt the determination of the right rules of conduct for human beings in different relations and circumstances would naturally come under the notion of Art. But on the view that the end of moral action is often the Rightness of the action itself and not any ulterior consequences, and that this is known intuitively in each case or class of cases; we can hardly regard this knowledge as coming within the sphere of Art as above explained. Hence, as I do not wish to start with any assumption opposed to this view, I prefer to consider Ethics as the science or study of what ought to be, so far as this depends upon the voluntary action of individuals. Perhaps we should define it at once most precisely and most comprehensively by saying that it imparts or seeks the most perfect knowledge possible of the rightness or goodness of voluntary actions or their results.

§ 3. There is, however, a different view sometimes taken of the scope of Ethics, which requires careful notice. It is commonly supposed to consist, to a great extent, of psychological discussion as to the 'nature of the moral faculty:' and I have myself been obliged to include such a discussion in the present treatise.

Now it does not at first appear why this should belong to ethics, any more than discussions about the mathematical faculty or the faculty of sense-perception belong to mathematics and physics respectively. Our judgments 'that 2 and 2 make 4' and 'that every effect has a cause' are no doubt psychical facts: but we do not in mathematics or physics consider these truths in their relation to the thinking subject: we assume and apply them without psychological reflection. It is therefore interesting to inquire why this is not the case in ethics: why we do not similarly assume and use our ethical axioms without considering the faculty by which we apprehend their truth.

One answer is that the moralist has a practical aim: we desire moral knowledge in order to act on it. Now we cannot help believing what we see to be true, but we can help doing what we see to be right, and in fact often do what we know to be wrong: thus we are forced to notice the existence in us of irrational springs of action, conflicting with knowledge and preventing its practical realization: and the very imperfectness

of the connexion between our moral faculty and our will impels us to seek for more precise knowledge as to the nature of that connexion.

But this is not all. Men never ask 'Why should I believe what I see to be true?' but they frequently ask 'Why should I do what I see to be right?' It is easy to reply that the question is futile: for it could only be answered by a reference to some other recognized principle of right conduct, and the question might just as well be asked as regards that, and so on. But still we do ask the question widely and continually, and therefore this demonstration of its futility is not completely satisfactory; we require besides some explanation of its persistency.

One explanation that may be offered is that, since we are moved to action not by Reason alone but also by desires and inclinations that operate independently of reason, the answer which we really want to the question 'why' is one which does not merely prove a certain action to be right, but also arouses in us a predominant inclination to do it.

That there is an element of truth in this explanation I would not deny. Still I cannot but think that when a man asks 'why he should do' anything, he assumes in himself a determination to pursue whatever conduct may be shewn to be reasonable, even though it be very different from that to which he may happen to feel inclined. And we are generally agreed that reasonable conduct in any case has to be determined on principles, in applying which the agent's inclination is only one element among several that have to be considered, and commonly not the most important element. But though we are generally agreed on this, we are certainly not equally agreed as to what these principles are. The discrepancy which appears glaring when we compare the systems and fundamental formulæ of professed moralists seems to be really present in the common moral reasoning of men generally; with this difference, that whereas the philosopher bases his system on some one principle, and so attains consistency at the risk of paradox, the unphilosophic man is apt to hold different principles at once, in more or less confused combination. If this be so, we can offer another explanation of the persistent unsatisfied

demand for an ultimate reason, above noticed. For if there are several different views of the ultimate reasonableness of conduct, implicit in the thought of ordinary men, though not brought into clear relation to each other: it is easy to see that any answer to the question 'why' will not be completely satisfactory; as it will be given only from one of these points of view, and will always leave room to ask the question from some other.

I am myself convinced that this is the true explanation of the phenomenon: and it is on this conviction that the plan of the present treatise is based. I hold that men, in so far as they reason on morals and attempt to make their practice rational, do so, naturally and normally, upon different principles and by different methods. I admit, of course as a fundamental postulate of Ethics, that either these methods must be reconciled and harmonized, or all but one of them rejected. The common sense of men cannot acquiesce in conflicting principles: so there can be but one rational method of Ethics (in the widest sense of the word method). But in setting out to inquire what this is, we ought to recognize the fact that there are several natural methods.

§ 4. What then are the methods? what are the different practical principles which the common sense of mankind is *primâ facie* prepared to accept as ultimate?.....

If we accept any end as ultimate, *i.e.* as that at which as rational beings we ought to aim, we accept implicitly as our "method of ethics" whatever intellectual process enables us to determine the conduct most conducive to this end. And to every difference in the end accepted will correspond at least some difference in method..... We may perhaps say that *primâ facie* the only two ends which clearly claim to be *rational ends*, or ends absolutely prescribed, are the two just mentioned, Perfection or Excellence of human nature, and Happiness. And we must observe that on the latter of these ends two *primâ facie* distinct methods may be based, according as it is sought to be realized universally, or by each individual for himself alone. For though a man may often best promote his own happiness by labouring and abstaining for the sake of others' happiness, it seems paradoxical to assert that this will in-

variably be the case, and that the sacrifice of one's own happiness to that of others is in the nature of things impossible; at any rate, we cannot assume this at the outset of our discussion.

The case is otherwise with Excellence, at least so far as Moral Excellence is concerned. Circumstances are indeed conceivable in which a man is not unlikely to think that he could best promote the virtue of others by sacrificing his own, and it is probable that noble natures are occasionally tempted to this kind of self-devotion. But no moralist has ever approved of such sacrifice. In all systems in which Virtue is considered as the sole or chief good of man, it is his own virtue which the individual is bidden to take as his primary end: he is only directed to promote the virtue of others in so far as this promotion is compatible with the complete realization of Virtue in himself. Such promotion, in fact, is an exercise of the special Virtue of Benevolence: and moralists of repute have even doubted whether it properly comes within the scope of this Virtue; and whether we ought not to be content with trying to make others happier, leaving it to them to make themselves better. And since Virtue is commonly conceived not only as the most valuable element of human perfection or Excellence, but as having a value even incommensurable with that of other elements: while again the realization of Virtue is thought (by those who reject Utilitarianism) to consist in the complete observance of certain absolute rules of Duty, intuitively known; any method which takes Perfection or Excellence of human nature as ultimate End will coincide to a great extent with that commonly called Intuitive or Intuitional. For the Right Conduct that on the latter view is absolutely prescribed will be that which exhibits and develops the Goodness or Excellence of Character, which on the former view we take as our ultimate end.....

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATION OF ETHICS TO POLITICS.

§ 1. In the last chapter I have spoken of Ethics and Politics as branches of Practical Philosophy, including in the scope of their investigation somewhat that lies outside the sphere of positive sciences: viz. the determination of ends to be sought, or absolute rules to be obeyed. Before proceeding further, it would naturally seem desirable to determine in outline the limits and mutual relations of these different studies; though it is somewhat difficult to do this satisfactorily at the outset of our inquiry: because generally according as we adopt one method of ethics or another we shall adopt different views as to these limits and relations.

If we define Politics as the theory of what ought to be (in human affairs) as far as this depends on the common action of societies of men; we may subdivide it into (1) the Theory of the *work* of government, of which legislation and enforcement of laws is a chief part; and (2) the Theory of the constitution of government, and its relation to the governed (other than the relation of command and obedience, which is involved in the notion of government).

As regards (1). Since a Theory of Legislation is a Theory of what men ought to be compelled by legal penalties to do or forbear, and since no one ought to be legally forced to do what is wrong or bad, it may seem that the legal code will be included within the moral; and that we should determine first the whole code of rules to be observed, and then cut out of this the body of rules that should be legally enforced. On the other hand, it is clear that the right conduct for any member of

society depends to a great extent on what others expect him to do, and what he may reasonably expect them to do; and all such expectations are largely determined by Law. In such cases the definition of moral duty seems to be dependent on and posterior to the determination of legal obligation. But further, from an Egoistic point of view, it may seem that the reasonableness of observing any rules must depend on the consequences to oneself of observing or not observing them; and that legal penalties are likely to be decisive in this consideration; so that egoistic morality will practically depend altogether on Law, and not *vice versâ* (as in Hobbism). Here we see the need of distinguishing Positive Law and Ideal Law, or Law determined on theoretical principles. For all moralists are agreed that there is a general duty of obeying Positive Laws, even when they are not such as we approve: and few, if any, would maintain this duty to be unlimited, and that it is always reasonable to conform to the worst commands of tyrants. The limits, however, of this duty are hard to fix, and would no doubt be fixed differently by different schools. But as regards Law as it ought to be, Egoism does not seem to offer any principles: for though governors have not unfrequently framed laws and ordinances in their own interest, no speculative person has ever pushed

"the enormous faith of many made for one,"

so far as to construct an ideal social system with a view to the greatest happiness of a single member of it. Writers who have held it reasonable for an individual to take his own happiness as the end of his private conduct, have commonly considered the general happiness as the reasonable end of Law.

If then we examine the relation of Law to Morality from the Utilitarian point of view, it seems evident that the question, what rules of conduct and modes of distributing objects of desire should be legally fixed and enforced, will be determined by the same method of forecasting consequences by which all moral questions are settled on utilitarian principles: we shall endeavour to estimate and balance against each other the good and bad effects of such enforcement. In so far, however, as we divide the Utilitarian theory of private conduct from that of

legislation, and ask which is prior, the answer will be different in respect of different parts of the legal code.

1. To a great extent, obviously, a utilitarian code of law will consist of rules, which any man sincerely desirous of promoting the general happiness would observe, even if they were not legally binding: such as the rule of not inflicting any bodily harm or gratuitous annoyance on any one, except in self-defence or retaliation; and the rule of not interfering with another's enjoyment of wealth acquired by his own labour or the free consent of others or inheritance from parents; and the rule of fulfilling all engagements freely entered into with any one, unless the fulfilment were harmful to others, or more harmful to oneself than beneficial to him, or unless there were good grounds for supposing that the other party would not perform his share of a bilateral contract; and the rule of supporting one's children while helpless, and their mother during pregnancy and nursing, and one's parents if decrepit, and of educating one's children suitably to their future life. As regards such rules as these, Ethics seems independent of Politics, and naturally prior to it; we first consider what conduct is right for private individuals, and then to how much of this they ought to be compelled by legal penalties.

2. There are other rules again which it is clearly for the general happiness to observe, if only their observance is enforced on others; *e.g.* abstinence from personal retaliation of injuries, and a more general and unhesitating fulfilment of contracts than would perhaps be expedient if they were not legally enforced.

3. But again, in the complete determination of the mutual claims of members of society to services and forbearances, there are many points on which the utilitarian theory of right private conduct apart from law would lead to a considerable variety of conclusions, from the great difference in the force of the relevant considerations under different circumstances; while at the same time uniformity is either indispensable, to prevent disputes and disappointments, or at least highly desirable, in order to maintain effectively such rules of conduct as are *generally*—though not *universally*—expedient. Under this head would come the exacter definition of the limits of appropriation, *e.g.* as regards

incorporeal property in literary compositions and technical inventions, and much of the law of inheritance, and of the law regulating the family relations. In all these cases, in so far as they are capable of being theoretically determined, Utilitarian Ethics blends with and is indistinguishable from Utilitarian Politics. We cannot determine the right conduct for a private individual in any particular case, without first ascertaining the rule which it would be generally expedient to maintain in the society of which he is a member. When this is settled there remains for the politician the further problem of deciding which of these rules should be enforced by legal penalties, and which should be left to rest on the weaker and less definite sanctions of moral opinion. It would be out of place to discuss here the principles on which this problem should be determined: but we may observe that their application to any concrete case is necessarily complicated by the consideration of the delicate mutual relations of Positive Law and Positive Morality—as we may call the actual moral opinions generally held in a given society at a given time. For on the one hand it is dangerous in legislation to advance beyond Positive Morality, by prohibiting actions (or inactions) that are generally approved or tolerated; on the other hand, up to the point at which this danger becomes serious, legislation is a most effective instrument for modifying or intensifying public opinion, in the direction in which it is desirable that it should progress. Leaving this difficult question of social dynamics, we may say that normally in a well-organized society the most important and indispensable rules of social behaviour will be legally enforced and the less important left to be maintained by Positive Morality. Law will constitute, as it were, the skeleton of social order, clothed upon by the flesh and blood of Morality.

What has been said above of the blending of Ethics and Politics from a utilitarian point of view applies, of course, to the rules which form the second part of Politics (as I define the term). It is obvious that the moral regulation of the relations of governors to the governed, and of the different parts of government to each other, must be theoretically determined in close connexion with the definite quasi-legal code which is called the Constitution.

I have treated this subject first from the utilitarian point of view, partly because it is difficult to give any 'Intuitional Method of Politics' which can plausibly claim, as Ethical Intuitionism does, to express or interpret the common sense of mankind. For in the first place Utilitarianism seems to be commonly accepted in Politics to a much greater extent than it is in the sphere of private conduct: many who recognize absolute rules of private duty, to be obeyed without regard to consequences, still hold that it is a question of expediency what actions and abstinences morally right or allowable should be made compulsory under legal penalties; and similarly that the right form of government for any society is to be determined on grounds of expediency only. There seem however to be others who hold that the promotion of the virtue of citizens as distinct from their happiness is the primary end of the State, and that the laws and constitution should be framed on this principle and churches and other educational organizations maintained for the same purpose. On this view, the whole of Ethics seems essentially prior to Politics: we must determine what Virtue is, before we can profitably consider what form of Government is best adapted to promote it. More frequently the connexion of Ethics and Politics is taken to lie in the notion of Justice; it being held that Justice is something that can be ascertained and sought apart from Utility, and that it ought to be realized in legislation and administration. One development of this latter view gives, as the counterpart of the common ethical doctrine of absolute *duties*, the political doctrine of absolute *rights*, to maintain which is the primary end of civil law. Then further, since among these 'natural rights' is reckoned the Right to Freedom, limited only by the equal freedom of others—indeed by many (as Kant) the Right to Freedom is held to include all truly natural rights—it is inferred that no man is originally and 'naturally' bound to obey any other: and thus we get the constitutional principle that the Right of Government to exist and operate must be derived from the consent of its subjects to a limitation of their natural rights. How far these rights are alienable, and how the consent of the members of any society to their partial alienation may be inferred, are thus the fundamental questions

in considering the legitimacy of any form of government. Again, in more or less distinct opposition to this last view it was once held, and the doctrine still lingers, that the natural right of government in any society is vested, as a kind of heritable though not transferable property, in the persons belonging to a particular line of descent.

It seems then that, on the Intuitional view, the precise determination of the duties of Justice and Good Faith (as well as of the duty of Order or Law-observance) is fundamentally important to Politics as well as Ethics: so that on this side the two studies can hardly be separated. But further, apart from any consideration of the main end and rational basis of Government, there remains an important inquiry, which we may call ethico-political, as to the extent to which Governments are bound to observe the same moral rules as private persons, in their dealings with their subjects as with other individuals or Governments. This inquiry hardly comes within the scope of the present treatise: but we may observe that here again the results are likely to vary considerably, according as we employ the Utilitarian or the Intuitional method.

§ 2. There is, however, another view which regards Ethics as dependent on Politics in quite a different manner: viz. as being an investigation not of what ought to be done here and now, but of what ought to be the rules of behaviour in an ideal society. So that the subject-matter of our science would be doubly ideal: as it would not only prescribe what ought to be done as distinct from what is, but what ought to be done in a society that itself *is* not, but only *ought* to be. Those who take this view adduce the analogy of Geometry.....

(Conclusion)..... How far [this foreknown social order] should be taken as such a pattern, is a question which would still have to be determined, and in the consideration of it the effects of our actions on the existing generation would after all be the most important element.

CHAPTER III.

REASON AND FEELING.

§ 1. In the first chapter I spoke of what ought to be done as being right and reasonable, that which Reason prescribes and urges us to do, either absolutely or as a means to an end apprehended as ultimately rational. This manner of speaking is employed by writers of different schools, and seems in accordance with the common view and language on this subject. For we commonly think that wrong conduct is essentially irrational, and can be shewn to be so by argument; and though we do not conceive that it is by reason alone that men are influenced to act rightly, we still hold that appeals to the reason are an essential part of all moral persuasion, and that part which concerns the moralist or moral philosopher as distinct from the preacher or moral rhetorician. On the other hand it has been widely maintained that, as Hume says, "Reason, meaning the judgment of truth and falsehood, can never of itself be any motive to the Will." It seems desirable to examine with some care the issue thus raised, before we proceed any further.

In discussing whether moral distinctions are perceived by the Reason, it is especially important to make clear the point at issue. As we know nothing of any faculty of the mind except from its supposed effects, and only assume different faculties to explain or express differences among the mental phenomena which we refer to them, we must always be prepared to state what characteristics in the feeling or cognition investigated such reference imports: thus only can we avoid

the sterile logomachy raised by such questions as "whether Reason desires or wills," &c.

By saying, then, that 'Reason prescribes or dictates an end,' I mean to imply two things; first that in judging that 'this action ought to be done,' or 'this end sought,' I am exercising what Hume calls the "judgment of truth or falsehood"; and secondly that this intellectual process is, or is inseparably combined with, a motive to action. It will be convenient to begin with the first proposition. This is hardly likely to be met with a direct counter-statement. No one expressly denies that this proposition 'I (or you) ought to do A' is in form legitimate, and that some propositions of this form are true and others false. But the common meaning of such propositions is by some writers implicitly rejected; and that chiefly in one or other of two ways, either of which is sustained by more or less plausible analogies.

In the first place it is said that the proposition really states no more than the existence of a particular emotion in the mind of the person who utters it: that when I say 'Truth ought to be spoken' or 'Truthspeaking is right,' I mean no more than that the idea of truthspeaking excites in my mind a feeling of approbation. And probably some degree of such emotion, commonly distinguished as 'moral sentiment,' always or ordinarily accompanies an ethical judgment. But it is absurd to say that a mere statement of my approbation of truthspeaking is properly given in the proposition 'Truth ought to be spoken'; otherwise the fact of another man's disapprobation might equally be expressed by saying 'Truth ought not to be spoken'; and thus we should have two coexistent facts stated in two mutually contradictory propositions. This is so obvious, that we must suppose that those who hold the view which I am combating do not really intend to deny it: but rather to maintain that the existence of the emotion is all that there is any *ground* for stating, or perhaps that it is all that any reasonable person is prepared on reflection to affirm. And no doubt there is a class of common statements, in form resembling statements of objective fact, which yet we are not commonly prepared to maintain as such if their validity is called in question. If I say that 'the air is sweet,' or 'the food

disagreeable,' it would not be exactly true to say that I mean no more than that I like the one or dislike the other: but if my statement is challenged, I shall probably content myself with affirming the existence of such feelings in my own mind. But there is a fundamental difference between this case and that of moral feelings. The emotion of moral approbation is inseparably bound up with the conviction, implicit or explicit, that the conduct approved is 'right' or 'ought to be done.' If I give up this conviction because others do not share it—which may very likely happen—I may no doubt still retain a strong liking for the conduct in question: but this liking will no longer have the special quality of 'moral sentiment' strictly so called. This difference between the two is often overlooked in ethical discussion: but any experience of a change in moral opinion produced by argument may afford an illustration of it. Suppose (*e.g.*) that any one habitually influenced by the sentiment of Veracity is convinced that under certain peculiar circumstances in which he finds himself, speaking truth is not right but wrong. A certain liking for veracity will probably still remain in his mind: he will feel a repugnance against violating the rule of truthspeaking: but it will be a feeling quite different in kind and degree from that which prompted him to veracity as a department of virtuous action. We might perhaps call the latter a 'moral' and the former a 'quasi-moral' sentiment.

The argument just given holds equally against the view that approbation is not the mere liking of an individual for certain kinds of conduct, but this complicated by a sympathetic representation of similar likings and aversions felt by other human beings. No doubt such sympathy is a normal concomitant of moral emotion, and when the former is absent, there is much greater difficulty in maintaining the latter: this however is partly because our moral beliefs commonly agree with those of other members of our society, and on this agreement depends to an important extent our confidence in the truth of these beliefs. But if, as in the case just supposed, we are really led by argument to a new moral belief, opposed not only to our own habitual sentiment but also to that of the society in which we live, we have a crucial experiment that proves the

existence of the moral sentiment proper as distinct from the represented sympathies of our fellow-men no less than from our own habitual likings and aversions. And even if we imaginatively extend the sympathies opposed to our convictions until they include those of the whole human race, against whom we imagine ourselves to stand as *Athanasius contra mundum;* still, so long as our conviction of duty is firm, the emotion which we call moral stands out in imagination quite distinct from the complex sympathy opposed to it, however much we extend, complicate and intensify the latter.

§ 2. So far, then, from being prepared to admit that the proposition 'A ought to be done' merely expresses the existence of a moral sentiment in myself or others, I find it strictly impossible so to regard my own moral judgments without eliminating from the concomitant sentiment the peculiar quality signified by the term 'moral.' There is, however, another view in which ethical judgments are considered to relate to the likings and aversions that men in general feel for certain kinds of conduct; not as sympathetically represented in the emotion of the person judging, and thus constituting the moral element in it, but as the causes of pain to the person of whom 'ought' is predicated. On this view, when we say that a man 'ought' to do anything, we mean that he is bound under penalties to do it; the particular penalty considered being the pain that will accrue to him directly or indirectly from a kind of conduct which his fellow-creatures dislike.

It cannot be denied that this interpretation has some plausibility. For in using, as we commonly do, the term 'moral obligation' or 'boundness' as equivalent to that contained in the verb 'ought' we imply an analogy between this notion and that of legal obligation: and in the case of law the connexion of 'obligation' and 'punishment' seems indissoluble: a law cannot be properly said to exist if it is habitually violated with impunity. But a more careful reflection on this very comparison seems to shew that it really affords an argument against the interpretation of 'ought' that I am now discussing. For the ideal distinction taken in common thought between legal and merely moral rules seems to lie in just this connexion of the former with punishment: we think that there

are some things which a man ought to be compelled to do, or forbear, and others which he ought to do or forbear without compulsion, and that the former alone fall properly within the sphere of law. And it is otherwise evident that what we mean when we say 'you ought to do this' is not merely 'you will be punished by public opinion if you do not': for we often join the two statements, clearly distinguishing their import: and further (since public opinion is known to be eminently fallible) there are many things which we judge men 'ought' to do, while perfectly aware that they will incur no serious social penalties for omitting them. The parallel with law may however be maintained in another way, by interpreting 'ought' as having reference to Divine penalties: which, no doubt, we commonly conceive to be adequate and universally applicable. Still the proposition 'I ought to do this' is so far from being equivalent to the proposition 'God will punish me if I do not,' that the former conviction is, in many minds, an important part of the grounds for believing the latter. Indeed when we appeal to the 'justice' (or other moral attributes) of God, as exhibited in punishing sinners and rewarding the righteous, we obviously mean—not only that God *will* thus punish and reward, but that it is 'right' for him to do so: which of course cannot mean that He is 'bound under penalties[1].'

At the same time I quite admit, as indeed I have already suggested in § 3 of chap. I., that we frequently pass judgments not very easy to distinguish from Ethical ones, in which the quasi-ethical notions do not, on reflection, seem to contain more than a reference to current opinions and sentiments. There is, in fact, in civilised societies a more or less definitely organized 'code of Public Opinion,' enforced by social penalties, which no moralist would maintain to be absolutely binding: or perhaps I should say *two* distinct codes, the one relating to graver, the other to lighter, matters; the Code of Honour, and the Code of Politeness or Etiquette. Each coincides to a considerable extent with the Code of Morality as ordinarily accepted; conduct that would bring dishonour is nearly always thought wrong; and the same may be said of conduct that is knowingly ill-bred or impolite, allowance being made for the comparative triviality

[1] 'Ought' is here inapplicable, for a reason presently given; cf. p. 20.

of the matters regulated by the Code of Etiquette. Hence in the ordinary thought of unreflective persons the duties imposed by either code are often undistinguished from moral duties: and indeed this indistinctness is almost inherent in the common meaning of many terms. For instance, if we say that a man has been 'dishonoured' by a cowardly act, it is not quite clear whether we mean that he has incurred contempt, or that he has deserved it, or both: as becomes evident when we take a case in which the Code of Honour comes into conflict with Morality. If (*e.g.*) a man were to incur social ostracism anywhere for refusing a duel on religious grounds, some would say that he was 'dishonoured,' though he had acted rightly, others that there could be no real dishonour in a virtuous act. A similar ambiguity seems to lurk in the common notion of 'improper' or 'incorrect' behaviour. Still in all such cases the ambiguity becomes evident on reflection: and when discovered, merely serves to illustrate further the distinction between 'rightness' or 'goodness' of conduct, strictly so called, and mere conformity to the standard of current opinion.

§ 3. It seems then that the notion of 'ought' or 'moral obligation' as used in our common ethical judgments, does not merely import (1) that there exists in the mind of the person judging a specific emotion (whether complicated or not by sympathetic representation of similar emotions in other minds); nor (2) that certain rules of conduct are supported by penalties which will follow on their violation (whether such penalties result from the general liking or aversion felt for the conduct prescribed or forbidden, or from some other source). What then, it may be asked, does it import? What definition can we give of 'ought,' 'right,' and other terms expressing the same fundamental notion? To this it might be answered that the notion is too elementary to admit of being made clearer by any formal definition. If however it appears that what the questioner wants is a complete account of the relation of Morality to other departments of the Known, we must add that it does not belong to Ethics to furnish this, but to some more comprehensive science: at any rate this task is not undertaken in the present treatise, which only attempts to methodize our moral judgments and reasonings, in which this

fundamental notion is necessarily used from first to last, in one form or another. There are, however, certain peculiarities in moral cognition, as compared with other kinds of knowledge, which it is important to point out. In the first place, we must distinguish the two quite different relations in which the moral agent stands to right conduct, according as he does or does not recognize it as such; and, correspondingly, two different senses in which 'rightness' is predicated, which are very liable to become mutually confusing. In one sense it is right for me to do what I think it right to do: but again, my thought may be wrong, so that what in another sense is right for me to do, may be really something different. It is convenient to call the former 'subjectively' and the latter 'objectively' right. Complete or absolute rightness requires the coincidence of the two. Generally, however, our moral judgments predicate objective rightness, unless the contrary is expressly indicated: they state what, while it is completely right if the agent thinks it is so, is in a certain sense right whether he thinks it so or not, and must be judged to be so by all rational beings who judge truly of the matter. Hence I have spoken of the cognition[1] of objective rightness as the cognition of a dictate or precept of Reason: reason being conceived impersonally, since all rational beings, in so far as they judge rationally, must necessarily judge similarly of the same matter[2]. The phrase implies further that in rational beings as such this cognition of rightness gives an impulse or motive to action: though in human beings, of course, this is only one motive among others which are liable to conflict with it, and is not always—perhaps not usually—a predominant motive. This possible conflict of motives is implied in the term 'dictate' or 'imperative'; which describes the relation of Reason to mere inclinations or non-

[1] By cognition I always mean what some would rather call "apparent cognition," that is, I do not mean to affirm the *validity* of the cognition, but only its existence as a psychical fact.

[2] It is said that "in morality we prescribe and dictate to ourselves." This is in a sense true, of course. The dictate of reason cannot, as such, influence my action unless by exercising *my* reason I cognize it. But the statement appears to me misleading, in so far as it ignores the difference between *rational* choice, in which the conduct chosen is in accordance with our conception of objective Right or Good, and mere *deliberate* choice, which involves no such conception.

rational impulses by comparing it to the relation between the will of a superior and the wills of his subordinates. This conflict seems also to be implied in the terms 'ought,' 'duty,' 'moral obligation,' as used in ordinary moral discourse: and hence these terms cannot be applied, like the generally equivalent terms 'right' and 'reasonable,' to the actions of rational beings to whom we cannot attribute impulses conflicting with reason. At the outset of this chapter I noticed that it was a disputed question 'whether Reason acts as a motive' at all: I do not, however, think that any one who accepts the view of ethical judgments maintained in the preceding section is likely to deny that such a judgment, in rational voluntary agents, is at least inseparably combined with an impulse to action of a peculiar kind, which it is necessary to distinguish from non-rational desires or inclinations. If this be granted, the question whether a bare cognition (or any purely intellectual operation) can or can not influence volition, does not seem to me one of practical importance, however interesting it may be from a psychological point of view[1].

§ 4. I am aware that some persons will be disposed to answer all the preceding argument by a simple denial that they can find in their consciousness any such absolute imperative as I have been trying to exhibit. If this is really the final result of self-examination in any case, there is no more to be said. I, at least, do not know how to impart the notion of moral obligation to any one who is entirely devoid of it. But in many cases where the notion does not appear to be explicit it will be found, I think, to be implied in some other conception in common use. Especially I would suggest that those who deny that they have any cognition of 'rightness' or 'duty,' should consider whether there is nothing that they judge to be 'good' or 'bad'; and then further consider whether by 'good' they do not mean 'desirable' in the sense of 'what *ought* to be desired,' or rather—since our desires are not altogether within the control of the will—'what *ought* to be sought or aimed at'; and by 'bad' similarly 'what ought to

[1] There still remains an ambiguity in the common use of 'ought,' which cannot well be removed till after the discussion on Free Will: cf. *post*, ch. v. p. 31, note.

be shunned.' It does not matter, at the present stage of our discussion, what it is that is thus judged to be good or bad; for nothing that has been said about 'absolute rightness' is intended as an argument in favour of the ethical method which I call Intuitionism as against Egoism or Utilitarianism. I am not maintaining that Reason prescribes certain kinds of conduct *per se*, without reference to ulterior ends: but that it prescribes something *per se*, whether that something be action or some further result to which the action is a means. For instance, in distinguishing the cognition of rightness from the cognition of a rule supported by penalties, I do not mean to affirm that it is not reasonable to be influenced by penalties; but only that if this is maintained the ethical judgment 'that pain *ought* to be avoided' must be expressly or implicitly passed. Similarly, nothing that I have said is inconsistent with the view that Truthspeaking is only valuable as a means to the preservation of society: only on that view I should find my absolute imperative in the expressed or implied proposition 'that society *ought* to be preserved.'

When, however, we include in our view the 'dictate of reason' that is implied in the assertion that anything is 'good' or 'desirable,' as well as that which is expressed in the assertion that anything is 'right' or 'morally obligatory,' we are exposed to another line of objection which must now be carefully considered. It is said that by 'good' no more is signified than the object of desire: that whatever we desire is *pro tanto* 'good' for us. No doubt (it is said) some desires are bad in so far as they prompt to mischievous actions: but this means that they prompt to actions for the consequences of which, when they arrive, we feel, on the whole, aversion more intense than the former desire. My 'good on the whole,' then, is merely what I actually should seek or aim at if such future aversions and desires were always present at the time of acting.

There is much in this view that seems to me true and important. I am quite willing to admit that the satisfaction of any desire is to a certain extent good: and that an equal regard for all the moments of our conscious experience—so far, at least, as the mere difference of their position in time is concerned—is an essential characteristic of rational conduct. Still

we can hardly accept the fact, that one never afterwards feels for the consequences of an action aversion strong enough to cause one to regret it, as a complete proof that one has acted for one's 'good on the whole.' For we reckon it among the worst consequences of some kinds of conduct that they alter men's tendencies to desire, and make them desire their lesser good more than their greater: and we think it all the worse for a man if he is never roused out of such a condition and lives till death the life of a contented pig, when he might have been something better. Shall we say then that a man's "true good" is what he would desire on the whole if all the consequences of the different lines of conduct open to him were actually exercising on him an impulsive force proportioned to the desires or aversions which they would excite if actually experienced? But such a hypothetical composition of impulsive forces involves so elaborate and difficult a conception, that it is surely paradoxical to say that this is what we *mean* when we talk of a man's 'good on the whole.'

In any case, however, I should still maintain that the notion of 'what ought to be aimed at' is now inseparable from the notion of 'one's good' as commonly used, whatever may be the primary meaning of the latter. The man who never yields to a desire, however strong, when he foresees that the consequences of yielding will rouse yet stronger aversion, is not merely a type from which actual human beings deviate—as they certainly do—but an ideal which we think they 'ought' to try to realize; such an effort therefore (we may say) is 'prescribed' or 'dictated' by reason, no less than the ordinary rules of morality are, in the view of Intuitionism.

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASURE AND DESIRE.

§ 1. In the preceding chapter I have left undetermined the emotional characteristics of the impulse that prompts us to obey the dictates of Reason. I have done so because these seem to be very different in different minds, and even to vary much and rapidly in the same mind, without any corresponding variation in the volitional direction of the impulse. For instance, in the mind of a rational Egoist the ruling impulse is generally what Butler and Hutcheson call a "calm" or "cool" self-love: whereas in the man who takes universal happiness as the end and standard of right conduct, the desire to do what is reasonable is commonly blended in varying degrees with sympathy and philanthropic enthusiasm. Again, if one conceives the dictating Reason—whatever its dictates may be—as external to oneself, the cognition of rightness is accompanied by a sentiment of Reverence for Authority; which may by some be conceived impersonally, but is more commonly regarded as the authority of a supreme Person, so that the sentiment blends with the affections normally excited by persons in different relations, and becomes Religious. While again, if we identify Reason and Self, Reverence for Authority blends with Self-respect: and again, the antithetical and even more powerful sentiment of Freedom is called in, if we consider the rational Self as liable to be enslaved by the usurping force of sensual impulses. Quite different again are the emotions of Aspiration or Admiration aroused by the conception of Virtue as an ideal of Moral Perfection or Beauty. Other phases of emotion might be mentioned, all having with these the common characteristic that they are inseparable from an apparent cognition,—implicit or explicit, direct or indirect,—of *rightness* in the conduct to

which they prompt. So that, although there may be important differences in their moral value owing to differences in their secondary effects or accompaniments, their primary moral effect does not vary without variation in the cognitive element of the moral consciousness. It is then with these cognitions that Ethics is primarily concerned: its object is to free them from doubt and error, and systematize them as far as possible.

There is, however, one view of the feelings which prompt to voluntary action, which is sometimes thought to be logically connected with a special theory of the principles on which such action ought to be regulated, and so to decide summarily the fundamental question of ethical method. I mean the view that volition is always determined by the greatest pleasure (or absence of pain) in prospect. If in the case of any conflict of impulses all the conflicting desires and aversions are strictly proportioned to pleasures and pains in prospect, it seems natural to infer that the only possible method of Ethics would be Egoistic Hedonism: for I cannot rationally think that one end of action has been definitely determined for me by unvarying psychological laws, and another conflicting end prescribed for me by Reason. If my own greatest pleasure—or what I think such—is what I cannot help aiming at, it cannot be true that I ought to aim at something else.

Reflection however shews that this inference, however obvious, is certainly not cogent. For it proceeds on the assumption that 'greatest apparent pleasure' is determined prior to raising the question as to Rightness or Reasonableness of Conduct: whereas it is manifestly possible that our prospect of pleasure resulting from any course of conduct may largely depend on our conception of it as right or otherwise: and in fact this must be normally the case with the conduct of conscientious persons, if the psychological theory above-mentioned is sound. Indeed on looking closer it rather appears that the adoption of this doctrine, which I may call psychological Hedonism in its extreme form, is so far from leading logically to ethical Hedonism that it is really incompatible with it. For a psychological law invariably realized in my conduct does not admit of being conceived as a 'precept' or 'dictate' of reason: this latter must be a rule from which I am conscious of being able to deviate.

But the truth is that no one holds in any practical sense that this strict proportion is actually maintained between desire and foreseen pleasure. It is a matter of common experience that the resultant or prevailing desire in men is often directed towards what (even in the moment of yielding to the desire) they think likely to cause them more pain than pleasure on the whole. "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor" is as applicable to the Epicurean as it is to any one else. This is definitely stated in the most popular of the treatises in which psychological Hedonism has recently been advocated. Men often, says J. S. Mill[1], not from merely intellectual deficiences, but from "infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be less valuable: and this no less when the choice is between two bodily pleasures...they pursue sensual indulgences to the injury of health, though perfectly aware that health is the greater good."

It is just because this is so that psychological Hedonism is of some real ethical importance. If it were really the case that each of us in acting *does* aim at *some* pleasure (or absence of pain) to himself, it would forcibly suggest as an ideal that he *ought* to seek his own *greatest* pleasure. It is important to observe that this is merely a suggestion. There is no inconsistency in holding that the precepts of reason have no reference to pleasure as an end, and yet that they actually operate in producing volition only in so far as they are connected with prospective pleasures and pains of some kind. In fact, not a few moralists seem to have held the two opinions together. Still though there is no cogent inference possible from the psychological generalization that his own pleasure is what each desires, to the ethical principle that his own greatest pleasure is for each the most desirable or ultimate end, we seem to have a tendency to pass from the one position to the other. If we once admit that our actual motives are always pleasures and pains of some kind, it seems unreasonable to be moved by them out of proportion to their pleasantness and painfulness, and not to choose the greatest pleasure or least pain on the whole. Again, it is commonly thought that an act in the highest sense virtuous must be done for its own sake and not for the sake

[1] *Utilitarianism*, c. 2, p. 14.

of the attendant pleasure, even if that be the pleasure of the moral sense: and that if I do an act from the sole desire of obtaining the glow of moral self-approbation which I believe will attend its performance, the act will not be truly virtuous. But if psychological Hedonism were true this opinion would have to be abandoned.

It seems therefore important to subject this generalization, even in its more indefinite form, to a careful examination.....

.. (§ 2.)... Hunger, so far as I can observe, is a direct impulse to eat food.....

(Cf. p. 36 of Ed. 1.) When, however, the desire is having its natural effect in causing the actions which tend to the attainment of its object, it seems to be commonly a more or less pleasurable consciousness: even when this attainment is still remote. Or at least the consciousness of eager activity, in which this desire is an essential element, is highly pleasurable: and in fact such pleasures, which we may call generally the pleasures of Pursuit, constitute a considerable item in the total enjoyment of life. Indeed it is almost a commonplace to say that they are more important than the pleasures of Attainment: and in many cases it is the prospect of the former rather than of the latter that induces us to engage in the pursuit. In such cases it is peculiarly easy to distinguish the desire of the object pursued from a desire of the pleasure of attaining it: as in fact attainment is not originally represented in the mind as a source of pleasure, but only becomes pleasant in prospect because the pursuit itself stimulates a desire for what is pursued.....

(Cf. p. 41 of Ed. 1.) So far, then, from our conscious active impulses being always directed towards the production of agreeable sensations in ourselves, it would seem that we find everywhere in consciousness extra-regarding impulses, directed towards something that is not pleasure; and, in fact, that a most important part of our pleasure depends upon the existence of such impulses.....

§ 4. The psychological observations on which my argument is based will not perhaps be directly controverted, at least to such an extent as to involve my main conclusion: but there are two lines of reasoning by which it has been attempted to weaken the force of this conclusion without directly denying it.

In the first place, it is urged that Pleasure, though not the only conscious aim of human action, is yet always the result to which it is unconsciously directed. The proposition would be difficult to disprove: since no one denies that pleasure in some degree normally accompanies the attainment of a desired end: and when once we go beyond the testimony of consciousness there seems to be no clear method of determining which among the consequences of any action is the end at which it is aimed. For the same reason, however, the proposition is at any rate equally difficult to prove. But I should go further, and maintain that if we seriously set ourselves to consider human action on its unconscious side, we can only conceive it as a combination of movements of the parts of a material organism: and that if we try to ascertain what the 'end' in any case of such movements is, it is natural to conclude that it is some material result, some organic condition conducive to the preservation either of the individual organism or of the race to which it belongs. In fact, the doctrine that pleasure (or the absence of pain) is the end of all human action can neither be supported by the results of introspection, nor by the results of external observation and inference: it rather seems to be reached by an arbitrary and illegitimate combination of the two.

But again, it is sometimes said that whatever be the case with our present adult consciousness, our original impulses were all directed towards pleasure, and that any impulses otherwise directed are derived from these by "association of ideas." I have seen no evidence tending to prove this: so far as we can observe the consciousness of children, the two elements, extra-regarding impulse and desire for pleasure, seem to coexist in the same manner as they do in mature life. In so far as there is any difference, it seems to be in the opposite direction; as the actions of children being more instinctive and less reflective are more prompted by extra-regarding impulse, and less by conscious aim at pleasure. No doubt the two kinds of impulse, as we trace them back to more rudimentary phases of consciousness, gradually become indistinguishable: but this obviously does not justify us in identifying with either of the two the more indefinite impulse out of which both have been developed.

But even supposing it were found that our earliest appetites were all merely appetites for pleasure, it would have little bearing on the present question. What I am concerned to maintain is that men do not *now* normally desire pleasure alone, but to an important extent other things also: some in particular having impulses towards virtue, which may and do conflict with their conscious desire for their own pleasure. To say in answer to this that all men *once* desired pleasure is, from an ethical point of view, irrelevant: except on the assumption that there is an original type of man's appetitive nature, to which, as such, it is right or best for him to conform. But probably no Hedonist would expressly maintain this; though such an assumption, no doubt, is frequently made by writers of the Intuitional school.

Note.—An interesting criticism on the views maintained in this chapter has been appended by Prof. Bain to c. 8 of his treatise on the Will [*The Emotions and the Will*, Ed. III.]. He thinks it true that we are not "every moment occupied with the thought of the subjective pleasure or pain connected with our pursuits;" and further, that "it is an advantage to intermit our subjectivity...a merit and recommendation of certain exercises, that they take us out of ourselves for the time." But he thinks that there is nothing in this "to destroy our character as rational beings, which is to desire everything exactly according to its pleasure value." For though "our desires do fasten upon the indifferent objective accompaniments of our pleasures...they do not set up these indifferent accompaniments as ends of pursuit, even when divorced from the pleasures that brought them into notice;" *e. g.* "when a man loses his enjoyment in hunting, he does not continue to desire hunting," &c.

I do not think that Mr Bain has quite apprehended the point of my argument as regards the pleasures of successful pursuit (which I have tried to make more clear in this edition). Let me take as an illustration of the point at issue the pleasure of scientific curiosity. I quite admit that one is sustained in the pursuit of truth by a consciousness of the pleasure it affords: and that if it ceased to yield such pleasure it would probably be abandoned. But I urge that this specific enjoyment is strictly unattainable, so long as one desires knowledge *merely* as a means to it: until the desire of knowledge for its own sake is somehow aroused in us, we cannot experience either the agreeable ardour of investigation or the true delight of discovery. Then when this desire has become strong, it may possibly, though it does not ordinarily, conflict with our desire for our pleasure on the whole: so that the love of knowledge may be not only disinterested but even self-sacrificing. I ought to say that Mr Bain recognizes self-sacrifice as an actual fact, but only as

prompted by sympathy with other human (or sentient) beings. I quite agree with him, that on no other supposition could "the dominion of Rome have ever been established, or England have attained her present power." But I think that this recognition is too restricted: and that we may similarly say that without other strictly disinterested impulses, the fabric of science would not have been constructed, nor the treasures of art accumulated.

CHAPTER V.

FREE WILL.

§ 1. In the preceding chapters I have treated first of rational, and secondly of disinterested action, without introducing the vexed question of the Freedom of the Will. The metaphysical difficulties connected with this question have been proved by long dialectical experience to be so great, that I am anxious to confine them within as strict limits as I can, and keep as much of my subject as possible free from their perturbing influence....

We are sometimes conscious of deliberately preferring what we clearly see to be an irrational course of action[1].....

§ 3. We must conclude, then, that against the formidable array of cumulative evidence offered for Determinism there is but one opposing argument of real force; the immediate affirmation of consciousness in the moment of deliberate action. And certainly, in the case of actions in which I have a distinct consciousness of choosing between alternatives of conduct, one of which I conceive as right or reasonable, I find it impossible not to think that I can now choose to do what I so conceive, however strong may be my inclination to act unreasonably, and however uniformly I may have yielded to such inclinations in the past. This belief seems to me bound up with the belief that I *ought*,

[1] The difficulty which Socrates and the Socratic schools had in conceiving a man to choose deliberately what he knows to be bad for him—a difficulty which drives Aristotle into real Determinism in his account of purposed action, even while he is expressly maintaining the "voluntariness" and "responsibility" of vice—seems hardly to exist for the modern mind. This is at least partly due to the fact that we have separated the notion of "one's own good" into the two *primâ facie* distinct notions of "interest" and "duty:" thus, being familiar with the conception of deliberate choice, consciously opposed *either* to interest *or* to duty, we can easily conceive of such choice in conscious opposition to both: though this is not, I think, a common phenomenon.

in the strictest sense[1], to choose any course; when I have ascertained the former to be to any extent illusory, the latter is immediately restricted to a corresponding extent. I recognize that each concession to vicious desire makes the difficulty of resisting it greater when the desire recurs: but the difficulty always seems to remain separated by an impassable gulf from impossibility. Whether this amounts to an affirmation of what any Libertarian metaphysicians have maintained as 'Free Will,' is a difficult and subtle question. But at any rate it will be admitted that the absence of adequate motive to do what I judge to be reasonable cannot be regarded by me, in deliberation, as a rational ground for not doing it. And since it is with the grounds or reasons of rational action, and not with the causes of irrational action, that Ethics is primarily concerned; there seems to be so far no necessity to determine the metaphysical validity of the consciousness of freedom to choose what is reasonable.

It may however be urged that in considering how we ought to act in any case, though we cannot suppose the action that is the immediate object of consideration to be irrational, we are obliged to take into account the probable future actions of others, and also of ourselves; and that with regard to these it is necessary to decide the question of Free Will, in order that we may know whether the future is capable of being predicted from the past. But here, again, it seems to me that no definite practical consequences would logically follow from this decision. For however far we may go in admitting Free Will as a cause, the operation of which may falsify the most scientific forecasts of human action, still since it is *ex hypothesi* an absolutely unknown cause, the admission of it cannot modify any such forecasts: at most, it can only affect our reliance on them.

We may illustrate this by an imaginary extreme case. Suppose we were somehow convinced that all the stars were endowed with Free Will, and that they only maintained their periodic motions by the continual exercise of free choice, in

[1] In a looser use of 'ought,' which cannot conveniently be discarded, we sometimes judge that *A* 'ought' to act or feel as a better man would act or feel in his place, though we may know that *A* could not achieve this by any effort of will. Cf. *post*, B. III. c. 1.

resistance to strong centrifugal or centripetal inclinations. Our general confidence in the future of the solar system might reasonably be impaired, though it is not easy to say how much[1]: but the details of our astronomical calculations would be clearly unaffected: the free wills could in no way be taken as an element in the reckoning. And the case would be similar, I suppose, in the forecast of human conduct, if psychology and sociology should ever become exact sciences. At present, however, they are so far from being such that this additional element of uncertainty can hardly have even any emotional effect.

To sum up, we may say that, in so far as we reason to any definite conclusions concerning the future actions of ourselves or others, we must consider them as determined by unvarying laws: if they are not completely so determined our reasoning is *pro tanto* liable to error: but no other is open to us. While on the other hand, when we are ascertaining (on any principles) what choice it is reasonable to make between two alternatives of conduct, it is just as impossible to apply determinist assumptions as it was in the former case inevitable. And from neither point of view does it seem to be of any general practical importance to decide the metaphysical question at issue in the Free-will Controversy.

§ 4. It is, however, of obvious practical importance to ascertain precisely how far the power of the will (whether metaphysically free or not) actually extends: for this defines the range within which ethical judgments are in the strictest sense applicable. This inquiry is quite independent of the question of metaphysical freedom; we might state it in Determinist terms as an inquiry into the range of effects which it would be possible to cause by human volition, provided that adequate motive were not wanting. These effects seem to be of three kinds: first, changes in the external world consequent upon muscular contractions: secondly, changes in the train of ideas and feelings that constitutes our conscious life: and thirdly, changes in the permanent tendencies to action that compose what is called our character.....

[1] In order to determine this we shall require first to settle another disputed question, as to the general reasonableness of our expectation that the future will resemble the past.

If this account of the range of volition be accepted, it will, I trust, dispel any lingering belief which the argument of the preceding section may have left in the reader's mind that some general practical consequences must logically result from the adoption of Libertarianism or Determinism. For it may have been vaguely thought that while on the Determinist theory it would be wrong to perform a single act of virtue if we had no ground for believing that we should hereafter duly follow it up; on the assumption of Freedom we should boldly do always what would be best if consistently followed up, being conscious that such consistency is in our power. But the supposed difference vanishes, if it be admitted that by any effort of resolution at the present moment we can only produce a certain limited effect upon our character and so indirectly upon our action at some future time, and that immediate consciousness cannot tell us that this effect will be adequate to the occasion, nor indeed how great it will really prove to be. For the most extreme.....

§ 5. There is however, as I before said, one special but very important department of Ethics in which the question of Free Will again emerges in a different way: I mean in the determination of just conduct[1].....

[1] Cf. Book III. c. 5: where I endeavour to shew that even here the difference of view is ultimately found to have no practical effects.

CHAPTER VI.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND METHODS.

§ 1. THE results of the three preceding chapters may be briefly stated as follows.

The aim of Ethics is to render scientific—*i.e.* true, and as far as possible systematic—the apparent cognitions that most men have of the rightness or reasonableness of conduct, whether the conduct be considered as right in itself, or as the means to some end conceived as ultimately good. These cognitions are normally accompanied by emotions of various kinds, known as "moral sentiments:" but the ethical judgment cannot be explained as affirming merely the evidence of such a sentiment: indeed it is an essential characteristic of a moral feeling that it is bound up with an apparent cognition of something more than mere feeling. Such cognitions, again, I have called 'dictates,' or 'imperatives'; because, in so far as they relate to conduct on which one is deliberating, they are accompanied by a certain impulse to do the acts recognized as right. For ethical purposes it is not of primary importance to determine anything more about this impulse than the direction in which it prompts: if a man acts in accordance with his conceptions of duty, the main question is, whether these conceptions are true or false: the exact characteristics of the emotional states that precede his volitions are a matter of only secondary concern. And this remains true even if the force actually operating on his will is mere desire for the pleasures that he foresees will attend right conduct, or aversion to the pains that will result from doing wrong: though we observe that in this case his action does not correspond to our common

notion of strictly virtuous conduct: and though there seems to be no ground for regarding such desires and aversions as the sole, or even the normal motives of human volitions. Nor, again, is it necessary to determine whether we are always, metaphysically speaking, 'free' to do what we see to be right. What I 'ought' to do, in the strictest use of the word 'ought,' is always 'in my power,' in the sense that there is no obstacle to my doing it except absence of adequate motive; and it is impossible for me, in deliberation, to regard such absence of motive as a reason for not doing what I otherwise judge to be reasonable.

What then do we commonly regard as valid ultimate reasons for acting or abstaining? This, as was said, is the starting point for the discussions of the present treatise: which is not concerned with proving or disproving the validity of any such reasons, but merely with the critical exposition of the different 'methods'—or rational procedures for determining right conduct in any particular case—which are logically connected with the different principles generally accepted. In the first chapter we found that such reasons were supplied by the notions of Happiness, Perfection, and Virtue or Duty.....

(On p. 60.) But again, it is a common opinion that of truly right action a great part is not done for any ultimate end, but merely because the action itself is 'Virtuous,' or 'our Duty': the terms 'Virtue' or 'Duty' being thought to state the ultimate reason for doing it. This is commonly called the Intuitional view of morals,.....

§ 2. It may seem, however, that I have by no means exhausted the list of reasons which are widely accepted as ultimate grounds of action. Many religious persons think that the highest reason for doing anything is that it is God's Will: while to others such ends as 'Self-realization' or 'Self-development' and 'Life according to nature' appear really ultimate. And it is not hard to understand why these principles are felt to supply deeper and more completely satisfying answers to the fundamental question of Ethics, than those discussed in the preceding section. For the notions just mentioned do not merely define 'what ought to be,' as such; they define

it in an apparently simple and universal relation to what is. God, Nature, Self, are the fundamental facts of existence; the knowledge of what will accomplish God's Will, what is 'according to Nature,' what will realize the true Self in each of us, would seem to solve the deepest problems of Metaphysics as well as of Ethics. But just because these notions combine the ideal with the actual, the complete examination of them belongs not to ethics as I define it, but to philosophy—or whatever we call the supreme architectonic study which is concerned with the relations of all objects of knowledge. When, on the other hand, we confine our attention to the strictly practical import of each notion, we find that, in so far as it is scientifically ascertainable, it always takes one or other of the forms previously given. To begin with the theological conception of 'God's Will.' Here the connexion between 'what is' and 'what ought to be' is perfectly clear and explicit. The content of God's Will we conceive as presently existing, in idea: its actualization is the end to be aimed at. There is indeed a difficulty in understanding how God's Will can fail to be realized, whether we do right or wrong: or how, if it cannot fail to be realized in either case, its realization can be the ultimate reason for doing right. But this difficulty it belongs to Theology rather than Ethics to solve. The practical question is, assuming that God wills in a special sense what we ought to do, how we are to ascertain this in any particular case. This must be either by Revelation or by Reason, or by both combined. The former is commonly distinguished as "internal" and "external." Internal revelation must be either ecstatic, in which case it does not seem possible to systematize its results at all; or not ecstatic, in which case its operation cannot be introspectively distinguished from that of our ordinary cognitive faculties, and so the 'Divine Will revealed' would be only another form of 'Duty intuitively known.' If, again, an external Revelation is proposed as the standard, we are obviously carried beyond the range of our science: in fact Ethics, in this case, must be pursued as a department of Scriptural Interpretation. On the other hand, when we try to ascertain by reason the Divine Will, the practical result is always found to coincide with that of one or other of the methods above delineated. For

either it is assumed that God desires the happiness of men, in which case our efforts should be concentrated on its production: or that He desires their perfection and that that should be our end: or that whatever His end may be (into which perhaps we have no right to inquire) His Laws are immediately cognizable, being in fact the first principles of Intuitionism. Or else it is explained that God's Will is to be learnt by examining our own constitution or that of the world we are in: so that 'Conformity to God's Will' would resolve itself into 'self-realization,' or 'life according to nature.' In any case, this notion, though it may supply a new motive for doing what we believe to be right, does not—apart from Revelation—suggest any special criterion of rightness. It rather presents itself as a common form under which a religious mind is disposed to regard whatever method of determining conduct it apprehends to be rational.

The implication of 'what is' and 'what ought to be' in the notion of 'Conformity to Nature' and 'Self-realization' is somewhat more difficult to disentangle. The latter it will be convenient to consider in the following chapter: where I distinguish the different interpretations of the term 'Egoism,' which I have taken to denote one of the three principal species of ethical method. As regards the former, in order to obtain a principle distinct from 'Self-realization,' we must suppose that the 'Nature' to which we are to conform is not each one's own individual nature, but human nature generally: that we are to find the standard in a certain type of human existence which we can somehow abstract from observation of actual human lives. The belief that it is our duty to conform to such a type is clearly due to the Theism implicit in the notion of 'nature'; that is, to the more or less definite recognition of Design exhibited in the empirically known world. It can only be on this assumption that men have found guidance for conduct in the *common* as opposed to the rare and exceptional, or the *original* as opposed to that which is later in development; or, negatively, in that which is not due to the deliberate action of human wills. For surely no one would maintain that these characteristics, considered in themselves and not as indications of design, are clear criteria of the reasonable in conduct: and that it is absolutely our duty to do what most persons do, or

what our ancestors did, or what our infantile impulses suggested, or what we should have been impelled to do, but for the direct or indirect influence of society. Can we, then, ascertain by contemplating the physical constitution of human beings, and the *ensemble* of their impulses and dispositions, what kind of life they were designed to live? It is, perhaps, not difficult to describe, in a way that all would accept, the general outline of man's natural life; but we can hardly obtain from such contemplation a method for solving practical problems. For it does not help us to say with Butler "that the supremacy of Reason is Natural," as we start by assuming that we are to do what Reason prescribes, and that this is conformity to Nature, and so our line of thought would become circular: the Nature that we are to follow must be distinguished from our Practical Reason, if it is to become a guide to it. In a sense, as Butler observes, any impulse is natural: but it is manifestly idle to bid us follow Nature in this sense: for the question of duty is never raised except when we are conscious of a conflict of impulses, and wish to know which to follow. And it will scarcely be said that we are always to follow the impulse that is felt as the strongest: at least this would be rather a supersession than an interpretation of the dictates of reason, and would often lead to conduct universally condemned. Nor does it seem, on reflection, that any of the three criteria above mentioned, which men have used in determining the application of the common notion of "natural," can serve our purpose.....

And if we take a more physical view of our nature and endeavour to ascertain for what end our corporeal frame was constructed, we find that such contemplation determines very little. We can perhaps tell from our nutritive system that we are intended to take food, and to exercise our various muscles in some way or other, and similarly our brain and organs of sense. But this carries us a very trifling way, for the practical question almost always is, not whether we are to use our organs or leave them unused, but to what extent or in what manner we are to use them: and when men attempt to enunciate the teachings of Nature on these points, they are always found either to blend confusedly observations of what exists to intuitions of what ought to be, or at least to

pass from the former to the latter by a transition which, however easy and familiar it may be to their minds, cannot be exhibited as a logical process of inference.

Nor, again, does it help us to adopt the more modern view of Nature, which regards the organic world as exhibiting, not an aggregate of fixed types, but a continuous and gradual process of changing life. For granting that this 'evolution'—as the name implies—is not merely a process from old to new, but a progress from less to more of certain definite characteristics; no one, I think, will deliberately maintain that we ought *therefore* to take these characteristics as Ultimate Good, and make it our whole endeavour to accelerate the arrival of an inevitable future. That whatever is to be will be better than what is, we all hope; but there seems to be no more reason for summarily identifying 'what ought to be' with 'what certainly will be,' than for finding it in 'what commonly is,' or 'what originally was.'

On the whole, it appears to me that no definition that has ever been offered of the Natural exhibits this notion as capable of furnishing an ethical first principle. And no one maintains that 'natural' like 'beautiful' is a notion that though indefinable is yet clear, being derived from a simple unanalysable impression. I am far from denying that what is right is necessarily conformable to Nature, or to the Divine Will, and that these latter notions supply the ultimate ground and reasonable motive for doing what is right. I only point out that they are not in themselves sufficiently precise to give a practical criterion of the rightness of actions.

§ 3.... In the meantime the list of first principles already given seems to include all that have a *primâ facie* claim to be included: and to afford the most convenient classification for the current modes of determining right conduct. And it corresponds to what seem the most fundamental distinctions that we apply to human existence: the distinction between the conscious being and the stream of conscious experience, and the distinction (within this latter) of Action and Feeling. For the desirable condition of a human being, considered as a permanent entity, we call its Perfection: while by Virtue or Duty, we mean the kind of Action that we consider good and worthy to be done: and similarly by Happiness or Pleasure we mean the

kind of Feeling that is *per se* desirable. At the same time I do not profess to prove *à priori* that there are these practical first principles and no more.....

On the other hand some readers may be expected to blame the list for excess rather than defect....Now in my first chapter (p. 9) I have explained that the methods which take Perfection as the ultimate end may be conveniently treated as varieties of Intuitionism: since, in the common notion of Perfection, Moral Perfection is preeminent, while by 'Moral Perfection' is commonly meant dispositions and habits tending to good action, the goodness being determined by direct intuition. But any identification or blending of Egoistic and Universalistic Hedonism, and even any representation of their differences as secondary and subordinate, ought, I think, to be carefully avoided: as such a *rapprochement* encourages a serious misapprehension of both the historical and the philosophical relations of these methods to the Intuitional or Common-Sense Morality. And the contrast between aiming at one's own and aiming at the general happiness is at any rate *primâ facie* one of the most fundamental that morality exhibits.....

.....At the same time it is not difficult to find reasons for this close union between Epicureanism and the modern, or Benthamite, Utilitarianism.....

And such a reason is found in the theory of human action held by Bentham (and generally speaking by his disciples), which has been discussed in a previous chapter. While firmly maintaining the "greatest happiness of the greatest number[1]" as the "true standard for whatever is right or wrong in human action," Bentham held no less firmly that every human being always does aim at his own greatest apparent happiness. He affirms, in the somewhat verbose precision of his later style, that "on the occasion of every act he exercises, every human being is led to pursue that line of conduct which, according to his view of the case, taken by him at the moment, will be in the highest degree contributory to his own greatest happiness, whatsoever be the effect of it in relation to the happiness of other similar beings, any or all of them taken together." He

[1] He afterwards omitted the last four words of the formula, as unnecessary and misleading.

goes on to refer those who doubt to the "existence of the human species as being itself a proof, and a conclusive one."

On this view, it is useless to point out to a man the conduct that would conduce to the general happiness, unless you convince him at the same time that it would conduce to his own. Hence egoistic and universalistic considerations must necessarily be combined in any practical treatment of morality: and this being so, it was perhaps to be expected that many disciples of Bentham would go further, and attempt to base on the egoism which they accept as inevitable the universalistic hedonism which they approve and inculcate. And accordingly we find that the latest expositor of utilitarianism, J. S. Mill, does try to establish a logical connexion between the psychological and ethical principles, which he holds in common with Bentham....

CHAPTER VII.

EGOISM AND SELF-LOVE.

§ 1 (on p. 75)..... It is thought that the best way of seeking happiness is to give free play to one's nature. This view we shall hereafter consider more fully in the course of our examination of Hedonism. While according to the former interpretation rational Self-development is really identical with the pursuit of Perfection for oneself: since it obviously does not in any way modify the standard of Perfection to emphasize the point that it is 'one's own' that is aimed at.

The notion, then, of Self-realization is to be avoided in a treatise on ethical method, on account of its indefiniteness: and for a similar reason we must discard a common account of Egoism which describes its ultimate end as the 'good' of the individual.....

Even the English term Happiness is not free from ambiguity. It seems to be commonly used in Bentham's way as convertible with Pleasure: or rather as denoting that of which the elements are pleasures. Still it is never quite certain that when a man speaks of Happiness he does not include, in indefinite combination with pleasure, something else which he reckons ultimately desirable: so that even this term, if not further defined, may involve us in serious misunderstandings.

CHAPTER VIII.

INTUITIONISM.

§ 2. It should be observed that the antithesis between Intuitionism and Hedonism is often stated in such a way as to imply that the only consequences of actions which can possibly be of ethical importance are pleasures and pains. It is, however, quite conceivable that men should judge remote as well as immediate events to be in themselves desirable, without considering them in relation to the feelings of sentient beings. Indeed we not unfrequently find men who, while they judge the conduct of others and shape their own by a consideration of remote effects, yet seem to regard not pleasures and pains but some other kind of effects as intrinsically and ultimately desirable: such as the promotion of Art or Knowledge, generally or in some particular department. Such a view, if expressly stated, would probably be classed by many as Intuitional; but if so the antithesis implied by the term would be a different one: it would be meant that these ultimate ends are judged to be good immediately, and not by 'induction from experience' of the pleasures which they produce. In this way we frequently hear of 'intuitive' or '*à priori*' as contrasted with 'inductive' or '*à posteriori*' morality; where the latter terms are used as synonymous with Hedonism of some kind. But such a contrast seems to indicate a certain confusion of thought. For what the 'inductive' moralist professes to know *à posteriori*, by induction from experience, is commonly not the same thing as what the intuitive moralist professes to know by intuition. In the former case it is the conduciveness to pleasure of certain kinds of action that is methodically ascertained: in the latter case, their

rightness: there is therefore no proper opposition. If Hedonism presents itself as a system of Ethics, and claims to give practical guidance, this can only be in virtue of the principle that pleasure is the only reasonable ultimate end of human action. It is true that this principle is often not explicitly stated: but it is always necessarily implied, and it obviously cannot be known by induction from experience. Experience can at most tell us that all men always do seek pleasure (that it does not support this conclusion I have already tried to shew): it cannot tell us that any one ought to seek it. This latter proposition is therefore as 'intuitive' as the statement of any other ultimate end.....

[The view that] recognizes simple immediate intuitions alone and rejects all modes of reasoning to moral conclusions..... we may describe as one phase or variety of the Intuitional method, if we may extend the term 'method' to include a procedure that is completed in a single judgment.

§ 3. .....a second Intuitional Method, of which the fundamental assumption is that we can discern certain general rules with really clear and finally valid intuition, will chiefly occupy us in Book III.

However there still remain minds to which the 'Morality of Common Sense' (as we may call it), even when made as precise and orderly as possible, is not satisfactory as a system, although they have no disposition to question its general authority. They find it difficult to accept as scientific first principles the moral generalities that they obtain by reflection on the ordinary thought of mankind. Even if these rules can be so defined as perfectly to fit together and cover the whole field of human conduct, without coming into conflict and without leaving any questions unanswered: still the resulting code seems an accidental aggregate of precepts, which stands in need of some rational synthesis. In short, without being disposed to deny that conduct commonly judged to be right is so, we may yet require some deeper explanation *why* it is so. From this demand springs a third species or phase of Intuitionism, which, while accepting the morality of common sense as in the main sound, still attempts to find for it a philosophic basis which it does not itself offer.....

§ 4. The three phases of Intuitionism just described may be treated as three stages in the scientific development of Intuitive Morality: we may term them respectively Perceptional, Dogmatic, and Rational or Philosophical. The last-mentioned obviously admits of great variation: in fact, as yet I have presented it only as a problem,.....for systematic direction of conduct, we require to know on what judgments we may rely as ultimately valid. Hence it would be desirable that professional moralists of the Intuitional school should take more care than they sometimes do to make this point clear in expounding their system. I observe, for example, that Dugald Stewart uses the term "perception" to denote the immediate operation of the moral faculty;.....At the same time, in describing what is thus perceived, he always seems to have in view general rules or notions[1].

..... (On p. 91.) when ethical discussion thus passed over into psychological analysis and classification, the conception of the objectivity of duty, on which the authority of moral sentiment depends, fell gradually out of view, without its being perceived how serious the loss was: for example, we find Hutcheson asking why the moral sense should not vary in different human beings, as the palate does, without dreaming that there is any peril to morality in admitting such variations as legitimate. When, however, the new doctrine was endorsed by the dreaded name of Hume, its dangerous nature, and the need of bringing again into prominence the cognitive element of the moral consciousness, was clearly seen.

[1] When Moral distinctions are said to be apprehended 'by the Reason,' it seems to be generally implied that they are universal in form. In fact, it is only by a certain extension of the common use of the term—on which I have ventured in order to avoid complication—that I have employed it (in c. 3) so as to include the bare apprehension of what is right here and now.

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD.

§ 1. We have hitherto spoken of the quality of conduct discerned by our moral faculty as 'rightness,' which is the term commonly used by English moralists. We have regarded this term, and its equivalents in ordinary use, as implying the existence of an absolute rule or imperative, prescribing certain actions in themselves, or a certain ultimate end of actions. It seems impossible for any moralist definitely to exclude the notion expressed by these terms; for every moralist outlines an ideal of conduct which he maintains to be a true ideal, and from which men may possibly deviate: even the Epicurean does this when he shews men by what actions each may obtain the greatest amount of pleasure possible for him: in so far, then, as these actions are not what men actually do perform, he can hardly refuse to describe them as actions that 'ought' to be performed.

And hence we may perhaps say that this notion of 'ought,' when once it has been developed, is a necessary form of our moral apprehension, just as space is now a necessary form of our sense-perceptions.

Still it is possible to take a view of duty in which this notion is at any rate only latent or implicit, and the moral ideal is presented as attractive rather than imperative. That is, we may consider the action to which we are morally prompted as in itself 'good' or 'desirable[1].' This, as was before

[1] In modern language the term 'Good' as applied to conduct has distinctly the specific meaning of 'morally excellent.' It seems however legitimate, and convenient for our present purpose, to consider this only as a special application of the fundamental notion of 'Good' = 'intrinsically desirable.'

noticed, was the fundamental ethical conception in the Greek schools of Moral Philosophy generally; including even the Stoics, though their system is in this respect a transitional link between ancient and modern ethics. And this historical illustration may serve to exhibit one important result of substituting the idea of 'goodness' for that of 'rightness,' which at first sight might be thought purely formal or even verbal.....

And we may perhaps observe as a fundamental characteristic of the process of ethical thought in Greece, that it continually brings into greater clearness and sharpness the antagonism between different species of the desirable, different elements included in the comprehensive denotation of 'good.' When the effort to make conduct rational was initiated, in the latter half of the fifth century B.C., by those remarkable public lecturers commonly known as the Sophists, this antagonism either was not seen or was treated as a mere illusion of the vulgar.....And though Plato felt the conflict between Virtue and Pleasure far more intensely, so that in one phase of his mental development he repudiated the latter as an object of rational pursuit: still his general tendency is to regard the two as inseparable.....

§ 2. .....

The general admission therefore that things which are called 'good' are productive of pleasure, and that the former quality is inseparable in thought from the latter, cannot justify us in interpreting the common estimates of the goodness of conduct as estimates of the amount of pleasure resulting from it. For (1) the attribution of goodness, in the case of conduct as of most other things, may correspond not generally to all the pleasure that is caused by the conduct, but to a specific pleasure, in this case the contemplative satisfaction which the conduct causes to a disinterested spectator: and (2) it may not excite even this specific pleasure generally in proportion to its goodness.....

§ 3. It seems, then, that if the scale in which actions (or other things) are arranged in respect of goodness or badness is not finally determined by direct intuition, the proper method of determining it has yet to be ascertained. But the preceding discussion leads us to notice a possible ambiguity in the judg-

ment that this or that kind of conduct is 'best.' For if conduct has a specific goodness which we discern by means of a special taste or emotional susceptibility—such as the term 'moral sense' seems to denote—we may judge one action to be 'better' than another, meaning that it has more of this specific goodness; without intending to decide that any additional degree of this goodness is always to be preferred to all other goods. And thus it may seem that conduct morally preferable, or preferable considered merely as conduct, may be judged different from that which reflection shews to be on the whole reasonable. I think, however, that as soon as this discrepancy is pointed out, we should refuse to acquiesce in it; and should avoid it by regarding the special emotional susceptibility to which the first, intuitive, preference is due as not properly 'moral' but rather 'æsthetic.' For, as was before said, an action approved by a strictly moral sentiment must be one that we think right; but we may derive a greater amount of pleasurable emotion from contemplating an action which we think on the whole wrong.

It thus becomes necessary to distinguish between the ideas of *Goodness* and *Beauty* as applied to actions: ..... we cannot identify the sense of beauty in conduct with the moral sense strictly so called: the most beautiful conduct is not absolutely the best, but only *ceteris paribus*.

When this distinction is taken, it will be easily admitted that though wrong conduct may be judged to have a certain kind of goodness, right conduct must always be 'best,' though not perhaps most beautiful. Or, more strictly, that it must be the 'best in our power:' for here we come to the second important difference that arises from attributing 'goodness' to conduct rather than 'rightness.' We never judge conduct to be 'right' unless we think that it is in our power to do it if we choose. But this is not necessarily the case with 'goodness': there are many excellences of behaviour which we cannot attain by any effort of will, at least directly and at the moment: hence we often feel that the recognition of goodness in conduct does not carry with it a clear and definite precept to do likewise, but rather

> the vague desire
> That stirs an imitative will.

In so far as this is the case, Goodness of conduct becomes an ulterior end, the attainment of which lies outside and beyond the range of immediate volition.

§ 4. In considering Goodness of Conduct, we have been led to discuss the extension of the same notion to other things, the value of which, if they are regarded as intrinsically desirable, must be somehow coordinated and compared with that of good conduct. It cannot be denied that there are many things *primâ facie* so regarded: indeed to many minds it seems natural to apply the notion of Ultimate Good to certain comparatively permanent results, material or otherwise; rather than to virtuous actions or pleasant feelings. It will be well therefore to examine this view carefully, before we proceed to the detailed discussion of Hedonism or Intuitionism. We may divide such permanent results as are commonly judged to be good, into (1) Qualities of human beings, mental or bodily, and (2) all other good objects. Among these latter we may first notice the material things external to our bodies to which the notion is ordinarily applied, as 'good' wines, horses, &c.... (On p. 101.) For practical purposes, we require to conceive some parts of the universe as at least less good than they might be.....knowledge is a good which cannot exist except in minds: and yet one may be more interested in the development of knowledge than in its possession by any particular minds.....

(On p. 101—2.) Still, as soon as this view is clearly stated, it will, I think, be generally rejected. It will be admitted that all objects of this kind, as well as all external material things, are only reasonably to be sought in so far as they conduce either to the Happiness (which we do not at present consider) or to the Perfection or Excellence of human existence.....

But now another question arises: whether, namely, there are any qualities of man considered as a permanent entity,—in contradistinction to the series of transient psychical states that make up his conscious life,—which we can really regard as ultimately good. Here I do not wish to enter into any abstruse discussion as to the relation of Phenomenal to Noumenal existence. I am content to take the common-sense view, according to which the human body is conceived as a comparatively permanent thing, capable of certain equally permanent

excellences, such as beauty, symmetry, &c.; while minds, again, are believed to be equally or perhaps far more enduring, and even destined to endless existence. When, however, we reflect upon our conception of any particular mind, separating it in thought from the particular state of consciousness in which it momentarily exists, we find that all that is definite in it—all indeed that it contains, except the bare notion of permanent identity—represents merely a complex of tendencies, *i.e.* Faculties, Habits, Dispositions, and so forth. Now whether these terms denote any present actual existence is a metaphysical question which we need not discuss: since it seems clear that what they denote can have no value for us, except as representing future actions and feelings.....

Thus we are led to the conclusion that the only Good (beside Pleasure) that can claim to be so intrinsically, and at the same time capable of furnishing a standard of conduct, is Perfection or Excellence of Conscious Life. How far this notion includes more than Virtue, what its precise relation to Pleasure is, and to what method we shall be logically led if we accept it as fundamental, are questions which we shall more conveniently discuss after the detailed examination of these two other notions, in which we shall be engaged in the two following Books.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCIPLE AND METHOD OF EGOISM.

§ 1.....(On p. 107) the most famous English moralist of the Intuitional school seems to grant "that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us...[1]."

(On p. 109.) In order, therefore, to fit these terms for the purposes of scientific discussion, we must, while retaining the main part of their signification, endeavour to make it more precise. By Egoism, therefore, we must explain that we mean Egoistic Hedonism, a system that fixes as the reasonable ultimate end of each individual's action his own greatest possible Happiness: and by 'greatest Happiness,' again, we must definitely understand the greatest possible sum of pleasures; or more strictly, as pains have to be balanced against pleasures, the greatest possible surplus of pleasure over pain..... This... is the type to which the practical reasoning that is commonly called 'Egoistic' tends to conform, when we rigorously exclude all ambiguities and inconsistencies: and it is only in this more precise form that it seems worth while to subject such reasoning to a detailed examination.....

[1] Butler, Serm. XI.

CHAPTER II.

EMPIRICAL HEDONISM.

§ 1. .....we are forced to assume all pleasures and pains to have quantitative relations to each other:.....so that they can all be arranged in a certain scale as greater or less in some finite degree. From this it follows that (to use Bentham's terms) the Intensity of a pleasure can be balanced against its Duration: for if one pleasure, finite in duration, be intensively greater than another in some finite degree, the latter may be increased extensively until it just balances the former in amount.

If pleasures, then, can be arranged in a scale, as more or less pleasant, so that each is conceived to have, as pleasure, a certain positive quantity; we are led to the assumption of a hedonistic zero.....

§ 2.....

How shall we define pleasure? It seems obvious to define it as the kind of feeling which pleases us, which we like or (if comparison be supposed) prefer. Or, perhaps, if we consider it in relation to the action of which it is the end and stimulus, we may say that it is the kind of feeling which prompts us to actions tending to produce or sustain it: to sustain it, if actually present; and to produce it, if only represented in idea. If, however, we define pleasure thus, when we compare pleasures and consider which is the greatest, we shall have to say that pleasures are greater and less exactly in proportion as they exercise more or less influence in stimulating the will to action. And this seems to be the common opinion; but some psychologists hold that the intellectual valuation of the pleasantness

of pleasures (even when actually felt) is liable to be out of proportion to the volitional stimulus which they exert. Mr Bain, for example, characterizes different kinds of feeling as more and less "volitional" or "antivolitional:" by which he seems to mean that with an equal intensity as pleasures (or pains) they yet stimulate action some in a greater, some in a less, degree; and this is the conclusion to which my own observation would lead, though the point is one which I find difficult to determine. In any case, the intensity of any pleasure and the intensity of its volitional stimulus seem, as introspectively cognized, to be two different facts: so that on the whole, it seems best to define pleasure, not as the kind of feeling which we actually desire and aim at, but as that which, when we experience it, we apprehend as desirable or preferable.

But here another difficulty occurs. It has been already stated, as an assumption of Hedonism, that it is reasonable to prefer pleasures in proportion to their intensity, and not to allow this ground of preference to be outweighed by any merely qualitative difference. If of two pleasures the one that is morally or æsthetically better, 'higher' or more 'refined,' is at the same time less pleasant, the Hedonist must consider it unreasonable to prefer it. This statement implies that the non-hedonistic preference (on grounds of quality as opposed to quantity) is possible: and indeed it is commonly thought to be of frequent occurrence. But if we take the definition of pleasure just given—that it is the feeling which we judge to be preferable—it seems to be a contradiction in terms to say that the less pleasant feeling can ever be judged preferable to the more pleasant.

Perhaps it would be admitted that in deciding on the preferableness of a pleasant feeling, considered merely as feeling, the judgment of the individual who feels it at the time of feeling it must be taken as final. Others may know (on general grounds) that by preferring this gratification to some other which he might hereafter enjoy he will obtain less happiness on the whole, and so far may rightly pronounce his choice mistaken; but it is hard to see how any one can controvert his preference as far as the present feeling alone is concerned. When, however, we judge of the preferable quality (as 'elevation' or

'refinement') of a state of consciousness as distinct from its pleasantness[1], we seem to take a point of view from which the judgment of the sentient individual is no longer finally valid; we appeal to some objective standard which others can apply as well as he. Hence I should conclude that when one kind of consciousness is judged to be qualitatively superior to another, although less pleasant, it is not the feeling itself that is preferred, but something in the circumstances under which it arises, in the active or passive relations of the sentient individual to other persons or things or permanent objects of thought. For certainly if we in thought distinguish any feeling from all its objective circumstances and conditions (and also from all its effects on the subsequent feelings of the same individual or of others) and contemplate it merely as the transient feeling of a single subject; it seems impossible to find in it any other preferable quality than that which we call its pleasantness, as to which the judgment of the sentient individual must be taken as finally valid[2].

This at any rate is the preference that Hedonism regards as ultimately rational, viz. the preference of feeling considered merely as such, without any regard to the objective relations under which it arises. And the fundamental assumption of

[1] It was before observed that by saying that one pleasure is superior in *quality* to another we may mean that it is preferable when considered merely as pleasant: in which case difference in kind resolves itself into difference in degree.

[2] It is sometimes said (as *e.g.* by Mr Green, Introd. to Vol. II. of Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*) that "pleasure as feeling, in distinction from its conditions which are not feelings, cannot be conceived." This is true, in a certain sense of the word 'conceive'; but not in any sense which would prevent us from taking Pleasure as an end of rational action. To adopt an old comparison, it is neither more nor less true than the statement that an angle cannot be 'conceived' apart from its sides. We certainly cannot form the notion of an angle without the notion of sides containing it; but this does not prevent us from apprehending with perfect definiteness the magnitude of any angle as greater or less than that of any other, without any comparison of the pairs of containing sides. Similarly, we cannot form a notion of any pleasure existing apart from some "conditions which are not feelings;" but this does not prevent us from comparing a pleasure felt under any given conditions with any other, however otherwise conditional, and pronouncing it equal or unequal: and we require no more than this to enable us to take 'amount of pleasure' as our standard in deciding between alternatives of conduct.

Hedonism, clearly stated, is that all feelings considered merely as feelings can be arranged in a certain scale of desirability, so that the desirability or pleasantness of each bears a definite ratio to that of all the others.

The empirical method of Hedonism, however, assumes somewhat more than this. It assumes that this scale and these ratios are empirically cognizable; that they are given in our experience of pleasure and pain. This assumption, no doubt, follows naturally from the former: since feeling cannot be conceived to exist otherwise than as it is felt—its manner of existence is its being *felt*—and therefore no state of consciousness can be thought to be more or less pleasant or painful than we in feeling it perceive it to be. At the same time, as we shall presently see, both assumptions require careful consideration.....

CHAPTER III.

EMPIRICAL HEDONISM CONTINUED.

(On p. 126.) If so, may it not be said that this supposed scale of pleasures (which at first sight seemed so clear and familiar a notion that it would be extreme scepticism to doubt its validity) turns out to be strictly incognizable? We must admit at any rate, that the conviction that our pleasures and pains have each a real definite degree, however deeply rooted in our minds, is a belief that cannot be verified by experience; and therefore that scientific Hedonism does not rest on a strictly empirical basis.

(Conclusion of Ch. III.) But the argument drawn from the indefiniteness and uncertainty of hedonistic calculation cannot be denied to have great weight. I am far from implying that it should lead us to reject altogether the method of estimating pleasure and pains by empirical-reflective comparison: I am perfectly conscious that, in spite of all the difficulties that I have urged, I daily perform a number of such comparisons with complete practical reliance on their results. But I think that we must at least admit the desirability of confirming or correcting the results of such comparisons by any other method upon which we may find reason to rely.

NOTE.—The discussion in this chapter will probably appear to most readers to be of a sufficiently sceptical and destructive character. I have however carefully avoided the exaggerations into which anti-hedonistic writers occasionally rush; and which tend, I think, to make practical persons regard all criticism of this kind as idle and captious. For instance, it seems to me a manifest extravagance to say that "not knowing how long it may be physically possible for a man to live, or how many pleasures it may be possible for him to get into a given

time, we are not able to conjecture what the number of pleasures which nature allows him may be, nor, in consequence, whether any action detracts from that number or no:" since almost all rational action of human beings, on whatever principles it proceeds, must be determined by probabilities, many of which are far less definitely calculable than the chance of duration of life for any given man; nor does it seem to be difficult for a man to form at least a rough estimate, from experience, of the amount of pleasure of any given kind which he can obtain within a given time.

Nor, again, have I noticed Mr Green's argument (cf. Introd. to Hume, Vol. II. p. 9, and *Mind*, No. VI. p. 266—9), that "a greatest possible sum of pleasures" is "intrinsically nonsense," because "pleasant feelings are not quantities to be added." For all that is meant by this is that a sum of pleasure cannot be enjoyed *as a sum;* that is, all at once. This may possibly be an argument against the reasonableness of taking 'greatest happiness' as the ultimate end of action; we are not, however, at present concerned with this, but only with the possibility of realizing it if we do take it; and I cannot perceive that this is affected by the necessity of realizing it in successive parts.

I need hardly add that no additional difficulty is introduced by the supposition that the pleasant feelings which are to be summed will extend through an infinite length of time: for we are of course perfectly able to compare quantitatively two or more infinite series of finite quantities, so far as we know the quantitative relations of the corresponding terms in the different series. If (as is probably the case in most hedonistic calculations) we have no knowledge of these relations beyond a certain point of time, the 'infinity' of the series cannot affect our calculations at all. We can only take into our reckoning what we can foresee: the fact, that beyond the limits of our foresight there are unknown elements which would be of importance to us if we knew them, cannot affect the reasonableness of our calculation as applied to the elements which we can know.

CHAPTER IV.

HEDONISM AND COMMON SENSE.

(On p. 136) ... and perhaps most of us would be rather puzzled if we were suddenly deprived of the guidance of common sense in our pursuit of happiness...

§ 3.....

And as for the quasi-philosophical paradoxes as to the illusoriness of sensual enjoyments, wealth, power, fame, &c., we may explain the general acceptance which these find by admitting a certain amount of inevitable exaggeration in the common estimates of such objects of desire, which from time to time causes a reaction and an equally excessive temporary depreciation of them. For as we saw (ch. 3) it is natural for men to value too highly the absent pleasures for which they hope and long. Power and Fame, for example, are certainly attended with anxieties and disgusts which are not foreseen when they are represented in longing imagination: yet there seems no reason to doubt that they bring to most men a clear balance of happiness on the whole. It seems clear, again, that luxury adds *less* to the ordinary enjoyment of life than most men struggling with penury suppose: there are special delights attending the hard-earned meal, and the eagerly expected amusement, which must be weighed against the profuser pleasures that the rich can command: so that we may fairly conclude that increase of happiness is very far from keeping pace with increase of wealth. Though, on the other hand, when we take into account all the pleasures of Culture, Power, Fame, and Beneficence, and still more the security that wealth gives against the pains of privation and the anxieties of penury, we can hardly doubt that increase of wealth brings on the

average *some* increase of happiness. So that it would be extravagant optimism to affirm that happiness is "equally distributed through all ranks and callings," while yet we may reasonably conclude that it is *more* equally distributed than the aspect of men's external circumstances would lead us to infer: especially if the pleasures that attend the exercise of the affections are to most persons really the most important of all...

CHAPTER V.

HAPPINESS AND DUTY.

§ 1. AMONG the current opinions as to the sources of happiness, there is one of such peculiar and supreme importance that it seemed best to reserve it for a special and separate examination: the belief, namely, that happiness is best attained by the performance of what is commonly recognized as Duty. We certainly find a general expression to this effect in most communities of men, at least after a certain stage in civilisation has been reached.....

§ 2. Accepting, then, the common division of duties into self-regarding and social, it may be conceded that as far as the first are concerned the view that we are examining is not likely to provoke any controversy.....

§ 4. (On p. 155.) In considering the force of these [internal] sanctions, we have first to distinguish and eliminate those pleasures and pains which lie in the anticipation of rewards and punishments in a future life: for as we are now supposing the calculations of Rational Egoism to be performed without taking into account any feelings that are beyond the range of experience, it will be more consistent to exclude also the pleasurable or painful anticipations of such feelings...

...(On p. 156.) To constitute such conduct reasonable for the egoist, we have to.....

(On pp. 158, 159.) Before, however, we proceed further, a fundamental difficulty must be removed which has probably some time since suggested itself to the reader. If a man thinks it reasonable to seek his own interest, it is clear that he cannot himself disapprove of any conduct that comes under this principle or approve of the opposite. And hence it may appear that

the pleasures and pains of conscience cannot enter into the calculation whether a certain course of conduct is or is not in accordance with Rational Egoism, because they cannot attach themselves in the egoist's mind to any modes of action, which have not been already decided, on other grounds, to be reasonable or the reverse. And this is to a certain extent true; but we must here recur to the distinction (indicated in Book I. ch. 3) between the general impulse to do what we believe to be reasonable, and special sentiments of liking or aversion for special kinds of conduct, independent of their reasonableness. In the moral sentiments as they exist in ordinary men, these two kinds of feeling are indistinguishably blended: because it is commonly believed that the rules of conduct to which the common moral sentiments are attached are in some way or other reasonable. We can however conceive the two separated: and in fact, as was before said, we have experience of such separation whenever a man is led by a process of thought to adopt a different view of morality from that in which he has been trained: for in such a case there will always remain in his mind some quasi-moral likings and aversions, no longer sustained by his deliberate judgment of right and wrong. And thus there is every reason to believe that most men, however firmly they might adopt the principles of Egoistic Hedonism, would still feel sentiments prompting to the performance of social duty, as commonly recognized in their society, independently of any conclusion that the actions prompted by such sentiments were reasonable and right. For such sentiments would always be powerfully supported by the sympathy of others, and their expressions of praise and blame, liking and aversion: and since it is agreed that the conduct commonly recognized as virtuous is *generally* coincident with that which enlightened self-love would dictate, a rational egoist's habits of conduct will be such as naturally to foster these 'quasi-moral' feelings.....

CHAPTER VI.

OTHER FORMS OF THE EGOISTIC METHOD.

§ 1.....I have also referred indirectly to the assumption apparently made by Aristotle (and also by Plato in some passages), that the kind of feeling which is most pleasant or preferable as feeling, will always accompany the kind of activity which we approve, or which we rank highest in some scale of excellence, determined by an appeal to moral intuition. The extent of this assumption seems to have been concealed from the ancient thinkers by the ambiguity of such terms as 'good,' 'well', which blend the general notion of 'desirability' with the notion of moral excellence: but when once the ambiguity is clearly seen, the assumption cannot be admitted as valid. The proposition, that conformity to moral rules, intuitions or instincts, is the course of action which tends to produce the agent's own greatest happiness, must be referred to the test of experience: and this, as we have seen, does not support it in its full extent. It remains to consider whether there is any other psychical or physical phenomenon, so universally connected with and proportional to Pleasure or Pain, that we can use it as a trustworthy guide to the attainment of Maximum Happiness.

§ 2. The only psychical phenomenon that presents itself as possibly possessing these characteristics is Desire or Inclination. There is no doubt that this kind of feeling is closely connected with Pleasure (and aversion similarly with pain): as I fully admitted in a preceding chapter (I. c. 4), in which I attempted to shew that the object of desire is not always pleasure. In fact pleasure, as we have seen (II. c. 2, § 2), is a state which normally (if not universally) produces desire for itself in proportion to its intensity; and pain similarly produces aversion.

And according to the received laws of psychical change (which experience continually confirms) the causes of pleasure come to be directly desired and the causes of pain shunned. While, further, according to the current theory of heredity, the desires and aversions thus generated tend to be inherited, and thus ultimately appear as what we call instinctive impulses, prompting, more or less unconsciously, to acts and objects productive of pleasure or preservative against pain. In this way we can understand how, by gradual 'adaptation of the organism to its environment' through 'registration of experiences' of pleasure and pain, the instinctive preferences of each individual might come to be more trustworthy guides to his happiness than hedonistic calculations. The belief that this is the case, leads us to a new method of Egoistic Hedonism; involving a remarkable inversion of that 'supremacy of Reason over inclination' which Moral Philosophy at its outset so emphatically proclaimed. That this reaction against the rule of the Calculative element of the Soul is to some extent justifiable I would not deny. It has been, I think, an error common to the majority of philosophers in all ages to despise or neglect too much the leadings of natural instinct. No doubt the consciousness of a strong 'instinctive' impulse ought always to be counted as an important element in deciding what course of conduct is likely to promote our happiness. And in estimating its importance we have not only to consider the pleasure to be gained by satisfying it, and the pain of ungratified desire; but also the *general* adaptation of our impulsive or appetitive nature to the circumstances of our life, and the consequent probability that the impulse is prompting us to an act which will be productive of happiness in other ways than by its own gratification. If our prudential comparison, apart from this latter consideration, gives an uncertain result, this may reasonably turn the scale in favour of the impulse.

To claim more authority than this for non-rational impulse or desire would I think be unwarrantable. For it is one thing to admit generally that every sentient organism tends to adapt itself to its environment, in such a manner as to acquire instincts of some value in guiding it to pleasure and away from pain: it is quite another thing to affirm that in the human

organism one particular kind of adaptation, that which proceeds by unconscious modification of instinct, is to be preferred to that other kind of adaptation which is brought about by conscious comparison and inference. It is clear, that this proposition can only be justified by a comparison of the consequences of yielding to instinctive impulses with the consequences of controlling them by calculations of resulting pleasure and pain: that is, by the very method of which the comparative untrustworthiness is sought to be proved. We require then, at least, a very wide induction from those clear and simple cases in which the intellect is allowed to be capable of deciding between the amounts of happiness consequent respectively on two alternatives of conduct. But no one will maintain that in the majority of clear instances where non-rational impulse conflicts with rational forecast, a subsequent calculation of consequences appears to justify the former; the assertion would be in too flagrant conflict with the Common Sense and common experience of mankind. Nor is it relevant to urge that, in other animals, the organism is continually adapted to its environment through the unconscious modification of Instinct by experience. For the extent of the analogy between such animals and man is just the point at issue. It may fairly be maintained on the other side that even in brutes, requiring as they do a far less complex adaptation to circumstances, the results of the unconscious process are imperfect: that conscious comparison and prudential forecast may be regarded as the natural substitute for and development of this unconscious adaptation in the more highly organized brain of man, related to far more complicated conditions of existence: that these comparisons and forecasts, again, become in their final form and most complete development the calculations of systematic hedonism which we have been examining: and that in proportion as Reason is developed the instincts that remain naturally sink into a subordinate place, and become more and more feeble and fallible guides. Indeed in many cases a man who took the resolution to rely on Instinct would simply surrender his will to a complicated conflict of wavering and alternating impulses, leading to the most ineffective fitfulness and fluctuation in external conduct. Experience, carefully examined, may perhaps lead us to the

conclusion that there are certain special departments of life in which instinct is on the whole a safer guide than prudential calculation. The intrusion of Prudence into these regions appears therefore to be suicidal: and we are led by a different road to the conclusion previously stated, that Rational Egoism is naturally and necessarily self-limiting. Still, this would not in itself involve the substitution of any other method for that of Empirical Hedonism: as we have found so far no satisfactory mode of determining the limits to which prudential calculation may prudently be carried, except by this very calculation itself[1].

§ 3. Perhaps, however, if we take a more definitely physiological view of the conditions of Pleasure and Pain, we may find some universal physical accompaniments of these feelings, so easily recognizable as to afford us that clearer guidance to happiness of which we are in search. And a theory of the kind that we want seems to be given us in the doctrine of Hobbes to which I have already referred, that "pleasure helpeth, and pain hindereth vital actions;" or, as Prof. Bain states it, with more accurate expression of the general relation of psychical to physical fact, that "pleasure is connected with an increase and pain with an abatement of vital functions." When, however, we come to examine this latter phrase we find a rather important ambiguity in it. It would most naturally mean that pleasure is the psychical correlate of an increase in the movements of nerve-matter that cause or constitute the physical action of any organ. But in this sense the theory seems contrary to experience: for we are all familiar with the fact that an unusual intensification of the action of many organs causes pain in some degree: such, for example, as results from the straining of the muscles of the arm in lifting great weights, or of the organ of hearing by very loud sounds. Nor can it be maintained that in these cases, though the action of the special organs is intensified, that of the organism as a whole

[1] I have not found it necessary to strengthen my argument by reference to the considerations leading to the belief that the 'adaptation of organism to environment' in a social animal results normally in instincts tending to ends different from its own pleasure, and perhaps forcibly conflicting with this. This point of view will be developed later.

is diminished: on the contrary, the excessive action that causes discomfort generally spreads to some extent beyond the organ primarily strained, and rouses the system as a whole to more than usual activity. If, however, it be meant that the physical movements of which pleasure is the concomitant are always such as tend *ultimately* to increase the activity of some special organ or of the organism taken as a whole, the doctrine comes into still more palpable conflict with familiar facts. Indeed the commonly recognised need of prudential guidance is due in a great measure to our experience of the effects in ultimately weakening and impairing the functions of important organs, due to exercises, at the time most agreeable, of the same or other organs. For example, gambling or novel-reading at night is often a highly pleasurable exercise of the brain, while at the same time it leaves it weaker next morning; and similarly alcoholic stimulation may enable the stomach to digest comfortably excessive meals, to the subsequent enfeebling both of that organ itself and of the whole system.

It may however be replied that, though the pursuit of Pleasure does not always lead to 'increase of vital functions' on the whole, it may still be true that if we make the latter our immediate aim, we shall get the greatest amount of pleasure on the whole that our constitution admits. On this view we should get a method of determining conduct that seems the physiological counterpart of one before noticed, which aims at Self-development[1], not as an ultimate end but as a means to happiness. It does not however appear on examination that the physiological view, taken by itself, can give us much definite guidance. For though I doubt not that the exercise of our intellectual faculties and emotional capacities, on which the most important part of human happiness depends, has always a physical correlate or counterpart which sometime or other we may perhaps come to know: still all attempts to establish a definite connexion between such faculties or capacities and particular portions of the human nervous system have as yet failed. Hence from physical observation and inference alone we can gain very little information as to the extent or manner in which our most important functions are being performed:

[1] Cf. Bk. I., c. 7, § 2.

and it will be admitted that the fullest exercise of our bodily organs, including the brain and nerves, in so far as the action of these can be physically estimated, will not by itself secure us a high degree of human happiness.

In order therefore to make the notion of Self-development practically available, it seems necessary to regard 'self' from a psychical point of view, as possessing a complex of mental faculties and capacities, for the completest possible exercise of which we have to provide. But what these are cannot be ascertained by introspection. Indeed, as regards many of them, the notion of *acquisition* seems really more appropriate than that of development: because the permanent possibilities of action, and even of passive feeling, which constitute my notion of my present self or mind, in so far as it is something definitely charactered and cognizable as like or unlike other minds, appear to be greatly due to my own previous actions and feelings, and are still capable of being modified by my own efforts and the influence of external circumstances..... The 'self' of each (meaning by the term his particular character and intellect) is never so completely determinate, as not to admit of being 'developed' further in a number of different ways; though no doubt these are confined within limits that, as life advances, are drawn continually closer.

(On p. 173.) ..... Experience certainly seems to support the view that men lose happiness by allowing some of their faculties or capacities to be withered and dwarfed for want of exercise, and thus not leaving themselves sufficient variety of feelings or activities. Indeed, as regards the bodily organs, which we began by considering, it will be agreed that the due exercise of most, if not all, is indispensable to the health of the organism; and further, that health is a more important source of the individual's happiness than the unsalutary exercise of any one organ can be; both from the absence of organic pain which it secures, and the positive though indefinite pleasure by which corporeal wellbeing is continually represented in consciousness. Still, it would appear that the harmony of functions necessary to health is a very elastic one...

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

INTUITIONISM.

§ 1. In the effort to examine, closely but quite neutrally, the system of Egoistic Hedonism, with which we have been engaged in the last book, one effect that will probably have been produced on the reader's mind is a strong aversion to the principle and method examined. Certainly such an aversion is very commonly announced as the result of contemplating Egoism: I believe that is felt by many even of those who (like myself) find it impossible not to admit the 'authority' of self-love, or the 'rationality' of seeking one's own individual happiness[1].

...(On p. 179.) The case of motives is different: these are known to us directly by introspection: and as an action externally the same may be done from most diverse motives, it is important to decide whether we regard the action or the motive as the proper object of moral intuition. Let us first get the question quite clear. Under the notion of 'action,' as morally judged, we consider not the muscular movements immediately caused by the agent's volition, but rather the effects of these; not however always

[1] I do not give this as a reason for rejecting the principle of Egoism, the rationality of which (as I have said on the preceding page) I find it impossible not to admit. But this feeling of aversion is a psychological fact worthy of notice, and the notice of it affords a convenient transition from Egoism to Intuitionism.

their actual effects, for those may be other than the agent designed, in which case they cannot be included in the conception of strictly voluntary action; but the effects which he foresaw in the moment of volition. It is this group of foreseen effects, conceived as chosen from among others equally in the agent's power, that we call his 'intention': and we shall agree, I think, that it is to this rather than to the outward act that moral approval or condemnation properly belongs. For though it is true that we hold a man legally responsible for unintended bad consequences of his acts or forbearances, when they are such as he, with average care, might have foreseen; still, we admit on reflection that moral guilt only attaches to them indirectly, in so far as this carelessness is the result of some previous wilful neglect of duty. And since by 'motives' we mean these same foreseen consequences in so far as they are also desired by the agent, it is easy to confound 'motive' and 'intention': and it would seem that this confusion is often made by those who say that the moral quality of an act depends upon its 'motive.' For when the distinction between the terms is clearly taken, it will be admitted that we are morally responsible in an equal degree for all the foreseen consequences of our acts, in so far as they were foreseen with equal definiteness and certainty, although we rarely desire more than a part of them.

On the other hand, the same act is no doubt often judged to be better or worse, according as in doing it we desired one part or another of the foreseen consequences: in some cases, indeed, a particular state of desire is included in the common notion of the action prescribed, and may even be the most important element. I think therefore that both Intention and Motive must be admitted as the subject of moral intuition, if we follow common sense: but that the judgment on intentions is, in the view of most men, primary and paramount. It is a commonplace to say that we must not do a bad action from a good motive: and generally speaking, it seems more natural to most men to judge of an action in its external aspect—presuming it to be intended unless there is positive evidence to the contrary—without attempting to penetrate to its motives. Indeed we do not take notice of our own motives except in

the introspective attitude of mind, which is habitual only in a small minority.....

§ 3. There is, however, one motive, of such special importance in Ethics, that it may be well to consider it separately: the impulse, namely, to do what is right, simply because it is right or good, in itself or as a means to some end conceived as ultimately good. In the Stoic system, and in the teaching of later schools which have much affinity with Stoicism, it has been held that action could not be strictly speaking right, unless done from this motive. To express this view, the term 'formal' as contrasted with 'material' rightness has been used: an action being called 'materially' right, if the agent in willing intended the right effects; 'formally' right, if he was moved by pure desire to fulfil duty, or (as others would say) chose duty for its own sake. There have been those who recognised no kind of rightness but the latter; but this view is extremely paradoxical, as in most minds the very existence of the desire or choice of doing right as such is inseparable from the belief that there is something right besides the mere desire or choice itself. 'Material' rightness, in fact, is what we commonly desire to determine on some principles or other when we ask what our duty is (a question which generally supposes a desire to do duty, if we only knew what it was); and it is clear that the doctrine of the paramount importance of the dutiful impulse does not point to any special principles for determining particular duties: we have still to arrive at these by some other road.

We must observe further, that the term 'formal rightness' may be differently used, as implying not a *desire* or choice of the action as right, but merely a *belief* that it is so. In this sense it is equivalent to what was before called 'subjective rightness.' Now it is obvious that I cannot perform an action from pure love of duty without believing it to be right: but I can believe it to be right and yet do it from some other motive..... Meanwhile it will no doubt be commonly admitted that no act can be absolutely right, whatever its external aspect and relations, which is 'subjectively' wrong. ...But however this may be, it is clearly with 'objective' or 'material' rightness that ethical discussion is mainly concerned.

There is, however, one practical rule of some value, to be

obtained by merely reflecting on our general notion of 'objective rightness,' before we proceed to discuss more special principles for determining it in any particular case. In a previous chapter[1] I endeavoured to make this notion clearer by saying that 'what is objectively right must be judged to be so by all rational beings who judge truly of the matter.' This statement does not imply that what is judged to be right for one man must necessarily be judged so for another: 'objective' duty may vary from *A* to *B* no less than the 'objective' facts of their nature and circumstances vary. There seems, however, to be this difference between our conceptions of ethical and physical objectivity respectively. In the variety of coexistent physical facts we find an accidental or arbitrary element in which we have to acquiesce, as we cannot conceive it to be excluded by any extension of our knowledge of physical causation. If we ask, for example, why any portion of space empirically known to us contains more matter than any similar adjacent portion, physical science can only answer by stating (along with certain laws of change) some antecedent position of the parts of matter which needs explanation no less than the present; and however far back we carry our ascertainment of such antecedent positions, the one with which we leave off seems as arbitrary as that with which we started. But within the range of our cognitions of right and wrong, it will be generally agreed that we cannot admit a similar unexplained variation. We cannot judge an action to be right for *A* and wrong for *B*, unless we can find in the natures or circumstances of the two some difference which we see to be a reasonable ground for difference in their duties. If therefore I judge any action to be right for myself, I implicitly judge it to be right for any other person whose nature and circumstances do not differ from my own in some important respects. Now by making this latter judgment explicit, we may protect ourselves against the danger which besets the conscience, of being warped and perverted by strong desire, so that we too easily think that we ought to do what we very much wish to do. For if we ask ourselves whether we believe that any similar person in similar circumstances ought to perform the

[1] Cf. Bk. I. c. 3, § 2.

contemplated action, the question will often disperse the false appearance of objective rightness which our strong inclination has given to it. We see that we should not think it right for another, and therefore that it cannot be right for us. Indeed this subjective test of the rightness of our volitions is so generally effective, that Kant seems to have regarded it as supplying a complete criterion of Duty. But this is an error analogous to that of supposing that Formal Logic supplies a complete criterion of truth. A volition which stands this test may after all be wrong, though a volition which does not stand it cannot be right. It is no doubt an undeniably sound precept that one should always "act on a maxim that one can will to be law universal." But all or most conscientious persons, as we have seen, implicitly conform to this precept: while at the same time we continually find such persons in thoroughly conscientious disagreement as to what each and the others ought to do, and in fact prepared to lay down a number of conflicting maxims, all equally possessing the potential universality which Kant requires. Under these circumstances, we cannot say that all such persons act rightly by acting on the potentially universal maxims; unless we identify subjective and objective rightness and affirm that whatever any one thinks right is so. But this ethical Protagoreanism is in flagrant conflict with common sense; and would obviously render the construction of a scientific code of morality futile: as the very object of such a code is to supply a standard for rectifying man's divergent opinions.

§ 4. We may conclude then that the cognitions which the present method attempts to systematize, are primarily direct intuitions of the moral qualities of particular kinds of actions, regarded for the most part in their external relations.

But here arises the question, Have we any such intuitions? For we ought not perhaps to take for granted the actuality of the Intuitional method, even as much as we did that of Hedonism in the preceding book. There is no doubt that men sometimes compare different pleasures, and pronounce one greater or less that another: but it has been doubted whether we ever by contemplating actions discern them to be right, and regard this perception as a paramount reason for doing

them. Or perhaps few would explicitly deny the proposition as just stated: but it is more common to maintain that this 'perception of rightness' is really a perception of conduciveness to pleasure. Here, if the agent's own pleasure be meant, the assertion is in conflict with experience: for most of us never seem to apprehend the existence of a moral rule more strongly than in cases where this apprehension is divorced from any expectation of consequent pleasure to ourselves.

It may however be answered, that though this is true as regards what we expect in this world, it does not apply to extra-mundane consequences; and that by a 'moral rule' we really mean a law of God, which we are impelled to obey from fear or hope of what God may do to us in the future. And no doubt in a Christian society, where there is a well-established belief that God will reward virtue and punish vice, it is difficult to prove that right actions are not done from hope of reward or fear of punishment. Still, there seems good ground for concluding that this is not always or perhaps even generally the case. For we find these moral beliefs operative in persons in whom religious convictions are dim and feeble, or even non-existent: and again, the most religious persons very commonly hold that right actions ought to be done because they are right, and not from self-regarding desire or fear: and introspection seems to shew that they are frequently so done, and that the more clearly because there is a peculiar pleasurable emotion, sometimes called 'the natural reward of virtue,' which attends such acts when done from pure regard for duty, but not otherwise.

But however this point may be decided, it is important to point out that it does not necessarily affect our present investigation. For since we conceive God as Supreme Reason, His laws must be essentially reasonable rules; and if these are known by intuition, it does not alter the method of determining right conduct that we have a supplementary belief that God will reward their observance and punish their violation, even if it be thought that this latter belief is our only reasonable ground for obeying them. As an illustration of this we may refer to Locke's view of morality.....

Others again hold that the 'perception of rightness' in an

action is really a perception of its conduciveness, not to the agent's happiness, but to happiness generally. And it certainly seems to me that such conduciveness is found, normally, if not universally, to be an attribute of conduct perceived to be right. But.....probably the statement, that at any rate the majority of men, in the present stage of human development, have an apparently intuitive apprehension of the rightness and wrongness of actions, would hardly have been denied; if there had not been some confusion between the psychological question of the *existence* of such apparent intuitions, what we may call the 'psychogonical' question of their *origin*, and the ethical question of their *validity*.

All three points, Existence, Origin, and Validity, should be discussed quite independently. The first question, it would seem, can only be determined by introspection, together with observation of the present phenomena of other minds, as made known to us by means of language and other signs. The second question must obviously be investigated by quite different methods, and it is not easy to see how this investigation can affect the former question, which ought rather to be settled before this is begun: as it seems premature to inquire into the origin of anything before we have ascertained what it is. We find, however, that the two inquiries are often so completely blended, that the term "intuitive" has actually been confounded in use with "innate," even by writers of deserved repute.....; the psychical consequent is in no respect exactly similar to its antecedents, nor can it be resolved into them: and there is nothing, at least according to the ordinary empirical view of causation, which should lead us to regard the latter as really constituting the former.

This confusion, however, between the Existence and the Origin of the psychical facts which we call moral intuitions, is chiefly due to the connexion that has been held to exist between their Origin and their Validity. For to say that an apparent cognition is untrustworthy is to say that it is not what it appears to be, does not exist *as a cognition*. And it has been very commonly assumed on the one side that if our moral faculty can be shown to be 'derived' or 'developed,' suspicion is thereby thrown upon its trustworthiness; while on the other

hand if it can be shown to be 'original,' its trustworthiness is thereby established. The two assumptions appear to me equally devoid of foundation. On the one hand, I can see no ground for supposing that a derived faculty, as such, is more liable to error than an underived one[1]. On the other hand, if we are once led to distrust our moral faculty, owing to the want of clearness and consistency in the moral judgments of each individual taken by themselves, and the discrepancies between the judgments of different individuals, I cannot see how our confidence in any exercise of it is to be reestablished by a demonstration of its 'originality.' I see no reason to believe that the 'original' element of our moral cognition can be ascertained; but if it could, I see no reason to hold that it would be especially free from error.

§ 5. How then can we hope to eliminate error from our moral intuitions? The common answer to this question was briefly suggested in a previous chapter where the different phases of the Intuitional Method were discussed. It was there said that in order to settle the doubts arising from the uncertainties and discrepancies that are found when we compare our judgments on particular cases, reflective persons naturally appeal to general rules or formulæ: and it is to such general formulæ that Intuitional Moralists commonly attribute ultimate certainty and validity. And certainly there are obvious sources of error in our judgments respecting concrete duty which seem to be absent when we consider the abstract notions of different kinds of conduct: since in any concrete case the complexity of circumstances necessarily increases the difficulty of judging, and our personal interests or habitual sympathies are liable to

[1] It is now widely believed that all our cognitive faculties,—in short the human mind as a whole, has been derived and developed, through a gradual process of physical change, out of some lower life in which cognition, properly speaking, had no place. On this view, the distinction between 'original' and 'derived' reduces itself to that between 'prior' and 'posterior' in development: and the fact that the moral faculty appears somewhat later in the process of evolution than other faculties can hardly be regarded as an argument against the validity of moral intuition; especially since this process is commonly conceived to be homogeneous throughout. Indeed such a line of reasoning would be suicidal; as the cognition that the moral faculty is developed is certainly later in development than moral cognition, and would therefore, by this reasoning, be less trustworthy.

disturb the clearness of our moral discernment. Further, we must observe that most of us feel the need of such formulæ not only to correct, but also to supplement, our intuitions respecting concrete duties. Only exceptionally confident persons find that they always seem to see clearly what ought to be done in any case that comes before them. Most of us, however unhesitatingly we may affirm rightness and wrongness within the range of our ordinary experience, yet frequently meet with cases where our unreasoned judgment fails us; and where we could no more decide the moral issue raised without appealing to some general formulæ, than we could decide a disputed legal claim without reference to the positive law that deals with the matter.

And such formulæ are not difficult to find: it only requires a little reflection and observation of men's moral discourse to make a collection of such general rules, as to the validity of which there would be apparent agreement at least among moral persons of our own age and civilization, and which would cover with approximate completeness the whole of human conduct....

CHAPTER II.

VIRTUE AND DUTY.

§ 1..... We shall therefore keep most close to usage if we define Duties as 'those Right actions or abstinences, for the adequate accomplishment of which a moral impulse is at least occasionally necessary.' If now we consider the relation of Virtue to Duty, we shall find some little difficulty in making it clear. For, in the first place, there seem to be some virtues (such as Generosity) which may be realized in acts objectively wrong, from want of insight into their consequences: and even some (such as Courage) which may be exhibited in wrong acts that are known by the agent to be such. But it is perhaps doubtful whether in such cases we should deliberately regard the quality thus manifested as a Virtue, though it certainly excites in us a quasi-moral admiration. At any rate it will involve no material deviation from usage if we for the present confine the term 'virtuous' to Right actions. Shall we say then that the spheres of Duty and Virtue coincide? Some I think, would accept this statement without hesitation: still in its common use each term seems to include something excluded from the other..... At the same time the lines of distinction are very doubtfully drawn on either side: for we certainly call men virtuous for doing what is strictly their duty: indeed we can hardly deny that it is, in some sense, a man's strict duty to do whatever action he judges most excellent. Perhaps we may legitimately maintain at once a stricter and a laxer standard of duty; the former to be applied by each to his own conduct and the latter to the conduct of others: distinguishing between 'what a man ought to do or forbear,' and 'what other men ought to blame him for not doing or for-

bearing.' But whatever view may be taken of this distinction, I think we shall find it most convenient to employ the terms, so that the Virtuous conduct may include the performance of Duty as well as whatever good actions may be thought to go beyond Duty: and this seems to be at least sufficiently in harmony with common usage.

§ 2. Virtue, then, may be defined as a disposition to do, or habit of doing, such right voluntary actions as require a moral impulse for their adequate accomplishment.

But here there may seem to be almost a contradiction in our terms: for if we do the action merely from habit, or as the result of disposition, it would seem that we cannot help doing it, and therefore that the action is not strictly voluntary. To avoid this difficulty Kant distinguishes a habit or settled bent of will from a habit of action; and calls the latter mechanical, but considers the former consistent with Freedom of Will. I cannot, however, see how we can really apply the metaphysical notion of Freedom to an action that we conceive as the necessary result of that definite character of any person, of which 'habits' and 'dispositions' are elements. And hence I must admit that the definition above given forcibly suggests the antinomy or conflict of inevitable assumptions which we noticed in an earlier chapter, and of which I only attempted to offer a practical solution[1]. An action to be virtuous must be voluntary; that is, it must be chosen by the agent out of several alternatives conceived as equally possible: and yet virtue is an element of character, and in so far as a man's character takes effect in his actions, these seem to be determinate before volition and therefore not, strictly speaking, voluntary. Still, as was before said, we may prevent this difficulty from invading our practical reasonings by defining an act or omission to be voluntary if absence of a sufficiently strong motive was the only obstacle to non-performance or performance. It may, however, be said that there are some virtues which are not even in this sense within the reach of voluntary effort: and that is another distinction between Virtue and Duty, that we can always do our duty, but cannot always realize a particular virtue.

...(On p. 197.) At the same time the distinction, if we follow

[1] Cf. Bk. I. c. 5.

common usage, is certainly not complete. For firstly, it is widely held that Virtue, at least in the highest form, involves a choice of the virtuous action for its own sake: and it is doubtful whether this is in any man's power at any moment. For though I can resolve unconditionally to do any action which I conceive to be right, or the best in my power, and can resist any motive that conflicts with reason, and can in various ways indirectly modify the force of my non-rational impulses; still, I do not see how I can prevent a non-virtuous impulse from being actually predominant when I choose the action to which it prompts. Again, the common notions of some virtues, such as Benevolence and Courage, seem to include a certain condition of feeling, which some men certainly cannot always produce when required: while the realization of others, such as Wisdom and Caution, involves operations of the intellect which it is no less out of our power to perform adequately by mere willing at any time, even when our general notions of wise and cautious conduct are as definite as they can be made. These Virtues can no doubt be gradually acquired by cultivation; but this is also the case with the other excellences from which we desire to distinguish them. Neither the latter nor the former are altogether discharged from the idea of duty as commonly conceived. They are all equally included in the current notion of the 'duty of aiming at excellence or perfection,' under which the principle of Æsthetic Intuitionism is commonly recognised as a subordinate part of the morality of common sense (just as the principles of the two kinds of Hedonism are recognised under the notions of Prudence and Benevolence respectively). And it is to be observed that this duty of cultivation extends to all virtuous habits or dispositions in which we are found to be deficient, in so far as we can thus increase our tendency to do the corresponding acts in future; however completely such acts may on each occasion be within the control of the will. It is true that for acts of this latter kind, so far as they are perfectly deliberate, we do not seem to need any special virtuous habits; if only we have knowledge of what is right and best to be done, together with a sufficiently strong wish to do it[1].....

[1] Hence the Socratic doctrine that 'all virtue is knowledge'; on the assumption that a rational being must necessarily wish for what is good.

...(Conclusion.) We may observe, however, one general principle on which all are agreed: that virtuous performance, in so far as it is thought to extend beyond the range of strict duty and is excellent and praiseworthy rather than obligatory, must always be postponed to the fulfilment of Duty proper. And hence it is important to take note of this distinction wherever we meet with it in our examination of the particulars of Duty and Virtue; even though we may hold that the apparent difference in stringency vanishes on careful consideration, leaving only a distinction between 'prior' and 'posterior' or 'absolute' and 'relative' obligation.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

§ 1. WISDOM was always placed by the Greek philosophers first in the list of virtues: in fact in the post-Aristotelian schools the notion of the Sage or ideally Wise man (*σοφὸς*) was regularly employed to exhibit in a concrete form the rules of life laid down by each system. In common Greek usage, the term just mentioned would signify excellence in purely speculative science, or even a superior degree of technical skill in any department, no less than practical wisdom: indeed Aristotle, who stood alone among the schools sprung from Socrates in distinguishing sharply 'theoretic' from 'practical' wisdom, restricts this term to the former, and uses another word (*φρόνιμος*) to denote the latter. The English term Wisdom however is chiefly used in reference to practice: and even when applied to the region of pure speculation suggests especially such intellectual gifts and habits as lead to sound practical conclusions: namely, comprehensiveness of view, the habit of attending impartially to a number of diverse considerations, difficult to estimate exactly, and skill in determining the relative importance of each. At any rate, it is only Practical Wisdom which we commonly class among Virtues, as distinguished from purely intellectual excellences. How then shall we define Practical Wisdom? Some would say that we mean by it merely the faculty of discerning the best means, in the conduct of life generally, to the attainment of any ends that the natural play of human motives may lead us to seek. But if so, it is not easy to see how it is less a

purely intellectual excellence than any species of technical skill, or faculty of selecting the best means to given ends in a certain limited and special department of human action. Such skill in the special arts is partly communicable by means of definite rules, and partly a matter of tact or instinct, depending somewhat on natural gifts and predispositions, but to a great extent acquired by exercise and imitation. So Practical Wisdom, or Skill in the Art of Life, as we might call it on this view, would involve a certain amount of scientific knowledge, the portions of different sciences bearing directly on human action, together with empirical rules relating to the same subject-matter; and also the tact or trained instinct just mentioned, which would even be more prominent here, on account of the extreme complexity of the subject-matter. But such skill hardly seems to be a moral excellence: and certainly the more ordinary use of the term Wisdom seems to include more than a faculty of finding the best means to any ends, as we should not call the most accomplished swindler wise. It seems, in short, to include right apprehension of ends as well as means. Here, however, a subtle question arises. For the assumption on which this treatise proceeds is that there are several ultimate ends of action, which all claim to be rational ends, such as all men ought to adopt. Hence, if Wisdom implies apprehension of right ends, it is clear that a person who regards some one end as the right or rational ultimate end will not consider a man wise who adopts any other ultimate end. Can we say then that in the common use of the word Wisdom any one ultimate end is distinctly implied? It may be thought, perhaps, that in the moral view of Common Sense which we are now trying to make clear, since Wisdom itself is prescribed or commended as a quality of conduct intuitively discerned to be right or excellent, the ultimate end which the wise man prefers must be just this attainment of rightness or excellence in conduct generally; rather than pleasure for himself or others, or any other ulterior end....

§ 2. We are unable, then, to determine by reflecting on Common Sense the principles of conduct which Wisdom will lay down. But leaving this question on one side, we may perhaps ask how far Wisdom, as exhibited in the perception of right ends, is attainable at will, and so, according to our defi-

nition, a Virtue. At first sight, the perception of the right end may seem not to be voluntary any more than the cognition of any other kind of truth; and though most cognition is attained partly by voluntary effort, still it is not possible for any man, by this alone, to exhibit intellectual excellences on any given occasion. It is thought however that the cognition of Moral truth depends largely upon the 'heart,' that is, upon a certain condition of our desires and other feelings, rather than the intellect: it is probably on this view that Wisdom is regarded as a Virtue; and we may admit it as such, according to the definition before given, in so far as this condition is directly attainable by volition. Still, on closer scrutiny, there hardly seems to be more agreement as to the emotional conditions of the cognition of ends than there is as to the ends themselves: as some would say that Prayer to God or ardent aspiration produced the most favourable state.....

So much for the influence of the Will on the decisions of the Reason. But when a man has decided what course of conduct is under any given circumstances rational, the question still remains whether he will certainly adopt it. Now I hardly think that Common Sense considers the *choice*, as distinct from the *cognition*, of right ends to belong to Wisdom: and yet we should hardly call a man wise who deliberately chose to do what he knew to be contrary to reason. We may perhaps explain this by pointing out that, though the modern mind seems to have no difficulty in admitting the conception of deliberate irrationality of conduct[1], still such a notion is unfamiliar in comparison with those of (1) impulsive irrationality, and (2) mistaken choice of bad for good. The latter of these, as we commonly think, is to be averted by Wisdom; the former, by Selfcontrol. If however we admit that "video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor" is often true of conduct planned with perfect deliberation, we must expressly recognize the duty of adopting, after deliberation, the decisions of the Practical Reason; whether we regard this as an exercise of Wisdom or of Selfcontrol, or of both combined. We should distinguish from this the more difficult excellence of adhering to resolutions in spite

[1] I have already adverted to the difference between the ancient and the modern mind in this respect. Cf. *ante*, B. I. c. v, § 1, p. 49 note.

of all gusts of impulse that the varying occasions of life may arouse. It is clearly our duty so to adhere, in so far as it is within the power of the will: as a resolution made after deliberation, in accordance with our view of what is right, should not be modified except deliberately: and this virtue, by some such name as Firmness, is commonly recognised as an indispensable auxiliary to Wisdom. But it can hardly be said to be altogether attainable at will, at least when it is most wanted: for the impulses against which we are especially required to be firm are often too rapid to leave room for a fully conscious act of volition. We can, however, cultivate this excellence more directly and certainly than others, by graving our resolves deeper in the moments of deliberation that continually intervene among the moments of impulsive action.

§ 3.....

...(Conclusion.) We must observe, in conclusion, that none of the maxims discussed in this section are absolute and independent. The Virtues are all subordinate to Wisdom; they are exhibited in the application to practice of the principles which Wisdom is exercised in apprehending.

CHAPTER IV.—X.

THE MORALITY OF COMMON SENSE.

C. IV. § 1. THE virtue of Practical Wisdom obviously comprehends all others[1], in so far as virtuous conduct in each department necessarily results from a clear knowledge and choice of the true ultimate end or ends of action, and of the best means to the attainment of such end or ends.....

...(On p. 210.) But we have to ascertain more particularly the nature of the actions in which this affection or disposition of will is shewn. They are described popularly as 'doing good.' Now we have before[2] noticed that the notion 'good,' in ordinary thought, includes, undistinguished and therefore unharmonized, all the different views that men take of the ultimate end of rational action. It follows that there is a corresponding ambiguity in the phrase 'doing good.' It suggests most prominently the promotion of Happiness: but we find that it is sometimes said, especially by the more severe moralists, that the real way to 'do good' to people is to increase their virtue or aid their progress towards Perfection. Perhaps, however, this usually means that Virtue is the most important source of happiness, and that therefore (rather than *per se*) the promotion of our neighbours' Virtue should be taken as the chief direct aim of true benevolence.

C. V. § 1.... It is an assumption of Intuitionism that the term 'justice' denotes a quality which it is ultimately desirable to realize in the conduct and social relations of men: and that

[1] The qualifications which this proposition requires have been already noticed, and will be further illustrated as we proceed.

[2] Cf. I. c. 7, 9.

a definition may be given of this which will be accepted by all competent judges as presenting, in a clear and explicit form, what they have always meant by the term, though perhaps implicitly and vaguely. In seeking such a definition we may, so to speak, clip the ragged edge of common usage, but we must not make excision of any considerable portion[1].

...(On p. 239.) We cannot affirm generally that all laws ought to affect all persons equally, for this would leave no place for any laws allotting special privileges and burdens to special classes of the community: but we do not think all such laws necessarily unjust: not, for example, that only persons appointed in a certain way should enact and execute laws, or that men should be forced to fight for their country but not women.

...(On p. 243.) For instance, if a poor man were to leave one tradesman and deal with another because the first had turned Quaker, we should hardly call it an act of injustice, though we might think it unreasonable. But if a rich landed proprietor in a country place were to act similarly, many persons would say that it was unjust persecution.

§ 3...(On pp. 246, 7.) Thus (*e.g.*) a society may present a system of castes imperfectly developed, so that the lines of separation are continually transgressed and partially obliterated: and the whole aim of a social reformer may be directed to the more perfect development of this system, by a more rigid separation of the castes. Still, when we reflect upon and compare these types, they appear some better and some worse: and we do not necessarily think that the type to which a more or less indefinitely or inconsistently framed society at any time most approximates is the best, even for the given society at the given time; at any rate, what we are now seeking is not a type

[1] Aristotle, in expounding the virtue of Δικαιοσύνη, which corresponds to our Justice, notices that the word has two meanings; in the wider of which it includes in a manner all Virtue, or at any rate the social side or aspect of Virtue generally. The word 'Justice' does not appear to be used in English in this comprehensive manner (except occasionally in religious writings, from the influence of the Greek word as used in the New Testament): although the verb "to justify" seems to have this width of meaning; for when I say that one is "justified" in doing so and so, I mean no more than that such conduct is right for him. In the present discussion, at any rate, I have confined myself to the more precise signification of the term.

so suggested, but an ideal deduced from some self-evident principles.

§ 4....(On pp. 248, 9.) The Equality at which Justice is thought to aim being interpreted in this special sense of Equality of Freedom.

Now when I contemplate this as an abstract formula, though I cannot say that it is self-evident to me as the true fundamental principle of Ideal Law, I admit that it commends itself much to my mind, and I might perhaps persuade myself that it is owing to the defect of my faculty of moral (or jural) intuition that I fail to see its self-evidence. But when I endeavour to bring it into closer relation to the actual circumstances of human society, it soon comes to wear a different aspect.

§ 6....(On p. 258.) On the necessarian view, then, it would seem to be ideally just (if anything is so) that all men should enjoy equal amounts of happiness: for there seems to be no justice in first making *A* better, or more capable of happiness, than *B*, and then, on that account, making him happier.

C. VI. § 7....(On p. 284.) However, we do not doubt that there are some national contracts, the obligation of which has not this quality of becoming evanescent: and it is hard to see how these are to be distinguished from others, except on grounds of expediency. For example, we think ourselves bound to pay the interest on loans contracted by our forefathers: and most of us think that we are bound to observe their treaties also. And yet a nation is at least excused for repudiating a treaty, when it is humiliating and oppressive: and again, we do not think it eternally bound to observe, as a part of its constitutional law, any compact that may have been made between previously divided or temporarily dissentient sections of itself: even though the compact may have been expressly announced as binding for ever, and though, from the nature of the case, it is impossible to obtain release from it. In short, it seems to be held that some special qualifications of the duty of keeping engagements are needed in the case of nations or other undying corporations: though we can hardly obtain from Common Sense any clear decision as to what these are.

C. VII. § 1....(On p. 290.) At the same time it is no doubt true that when we examine with a view to definition the qualities

that would be enumerated in any list of Virtues, we find, for the most part, that the maxims we obtain are not absolute and independent. In some cases we are forced to include in our definition an express reference to 'duty' or 'good' supposed to be already determined: in others we at any rate see that the quality denoted by our term is only praiseworthy in so far as it promotes individual or general welfare, and becomes blameworthy—though remaining in other respects the same—when it operates adversely to these ends. We have already noticed this result in one or two instances, and it will be illustrated at length in the following chapters.

C. IX. § 1. In chap. 3 we noticed the difficulty of defining Wisdom from the point of view adopted in the present treatise: because Wisdom is the faculty and habit of choosing the best means to the best ends, and in different methods of Ethics different ends are regarded as absolutely best. As (*e.g.*) in Egoistic Hedonism (cf. Book III.) the end of Self-love is so regarded: whereas according to the present method Self-interest (or what may appear such) must always give way to Duty.

C. X. § 1....(On p. 310, 311.) Danger is frequently sudden and needs to be met without deliberation, so that our manner of meeting it can only be, as was before said, *semi-voluntary*.....

So far then as Courage is not completely voluntary, we have to consider whether it is a desirable quality rather than whether we are strictly bound to exhibit it. And here there seems no doubt that we commonly find it morally admirable without reference to any end served by it.....

CHAPTER XI.

REVIEW OF THE MORALITY OF COMMON SENSE.

§ 1.....

We started with admitting the point upon the proof of which moralists have often concentrated their efforts, the existence of apparently independent moral intuitions. It seemed undeniable that men judge acts to be right and wrong in themselves, without consideration of their tendency to produce the agent's happiness or that of others: and indeed without taking their consequences into account at all, except in so far as these are included in the common notion of the act. We saw, however, that in so far as these judgments are passed on particular cases, they seem to involve (at least for the more reflective part of mankind) a reference of the case to some general rule of duty: and that in the frequent cases of doubt or conflict of judgments as to the rightness of any action, appeal is commonly made to such rules or maxims, as the ultimately valid principles of moral cognition. In order, therefore, to throw the Morality of Common Sense into a scientific form, it seemed necessary to obtain as exact a statement as possible of these generally recognised principles. I did not think that I could dispense myself from this task by any summary general argument, based on the unscientific character of common morality. There is no doubt that the moral opinions of ordinary men are in many points loose, shifting, and mutually contradictory, but it does not follow that we may not obtain from this fluid mass of opinion, a deposit of clear and precise principles commanding universal

acceptance[1]. The question, whether we can do this or not, seemed to me one which should be put to the test of experiment: and it is partly in order to prepare materials for this experiment that the survey in the preceding eight chapters has been conducted. I have endeavoured to ascertain impartially, by mere reflection on our common moral discourse, what are the general rules or principles, according to which different kinds of conduct are judged to be right and reasonable in different departments of life. I wish it to be particularly observed, that I have in no case introduced my own views, in so far as I am conscious of their being at all peculiar to myself. My sole object has been to make explicit the implied basis of our common moral reasoning: to formulate and tabulate the ultimate enunciations of that Conscience or Moral Faculty which is thought to be a possession of ordinary men no less than of philosophers. I now wish to subject the results of this survey to a rigorous examination, in order to ascertain whether these general formulæ possess the characteristics by which we distinguish certain truths from mere opinions.

...(Conclusion of § 2.) The reader should observe that throughout this examination a double appeal is made; on the one hand to his individual moral consciousness, and, on the other hand, to the Common Sense of mankind, as expressed generally by the body of persons on whose moral judgment he is prepared to rely. I ask him (1) whether he can state a clear, certain, self-evident first principle, according to which he is prepared to judge conduct under each head: and (2) if so, whether this principle is really that commonly applied in practice, by those whom he takes to represent Common Sense[2].

[1] Truths may be essentially self-evident which are yet not commonly seen to be so: indeed the fundamental notions of science, as they exist in ordinary minds, are so vague that men often accept as true or probable theories of which the impossibility can be demonstrated *à priori*. Nor is this only true of ordinary men. Even Galileo's first hypothesis as to the law of accelerating force involved a mathematical contradiction.

[2] It has been fairly urged that I leave the determination of Common Sense very loose and indefinite: and if I were endeavouring to bring out a more positive result from this examination, I ought certainly to have discussed further how we are to ascertain the 'experts' on whose 'consensus' we are to rely, in this or any other subject. But my scientific conclusions are to so great an extent negative, I thought it hardly necessary to enter upon this discussion. I have

...(On p. 328.) When we ask how far we are bound to give up our own happiness in order to promote that of our fellows, Common Sense if it does not distinctly accept the Utilitarian principle, certainly does not definitely affirm any other.

And even the common principle of Gratitude, though its stringency is perhaps more immediately and universally felt than that of any other moral rule, seems yet essentially uncertain: owing to the unsolved question whether the requital of a benefit ought to be proportionate to what it cost the benefactor, or to what it is worth to the recipient.

§ 5. When we pass to consider that element of Justice under which, as it seemed, the duty of Gratitude might be subsumed, the same difficulty recurs in a more complicated form. For here, too, we have to ask whether the Requital of Desert ought to be proportioned to the benefit rendered, or to the effort made to render it. On the one hand when we scrutinize closely the notion of personal merit, it appears, strictly taken, to imply the metaphysical doctrine of Free Will: since every excellence in any one's actions or productions seems referable ultimately to causes other than himself, except the original energy of the soul put forth in the effort to realize freely chosen Good or Right: and it does not seem strictly just that a man should be rewarded for the qualities which he has by transmission or education, any more than for the wealth or power which may come to him by inheritance. On the other hand it is obviously paradoxical in estimating Desert to omit the moral excellences due to transmission and education: or even intellectual excellences, since good intention without foresight is commonly held to constitute a very imperfect merit. Even if we cut through this speculative difficulty by leaving the ultimate reward of real Desert to Divine Justice; we still seem unable to find any clear principles for framing a scale of merit. And much the same may be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the scale of Demerit which Criminal Justice seems to require.

been careful not to *exaggerate* the doubtfulness and inconsistency of Common Sense: should it turn out to be *more* doubtful and inconsistent than I have represented it, my argument will only be strengthened.

CHAPTER XII.

MOTIVES OR SPRINGS OF ACTION CONSIDERED AS SUBJECTS OF MORAL JUDGMENT.

§ 1. We saw in ch. 1, that motives as well as actions are commonly regarded as matter of moral intuition: and indeed in our notion of 'conscientiousness' the habit of reflecting on motives, and judging them to be good or bad, is a prominent element. It is necessary, therefore, in order to complete our examination of the Intuitional Method, to consider this comparison of motives, and ascertain how far it can be made systematic, and pursued to conclusions of scientific value. And this seems a convenient place for treating of this part of the subject.....

To avoid confusion, it should be observed that the term 'motive' is commonly used in two ways. It is sometimes applied (as in ch. 1, § 2 of this book) to those among the foreseen consequences of any act which the agent desired in willing: and sometimes to the desire, or conscious impulse itself. The two meanings are in a manner correspondent, as, where impulses are different, there must always be some sort of difference in their respective objects. But for our present purpose it is more convenient to take the latter meaning.....

§ 2....(On p. 346.) For moralists of a Stoical cast (such as Kant) regard all actions as bad—or not good—which are not done from pure love of virtue, or Desire to do Right as Right. While Hutcheson, who represents the opposite pole of Intuitional Ethics, equally distinguishes this impulse; but treats it as at once coordinate in rank and coincident in its effects with Benevolence. It does not seem to me really in accordance with Common Sense to regard the predomi-

nance of this motive as an absolutely essential characteristic of right or even of Virtuous Conduct: indeed (as was before noticed) there are some duties which seem to be better performed if done from other motives; and it would be paradoxical to say that they become better when they cease to be virtuous. But it would be more paradoxical still not to recognise the love of virtue as a distinct impulse, the play of which is attended with its own peculiar satisfaction. And surely we must similarly recognise the more special impulses corresponding to particular virtues; and consider their rank in any scale of motives.

So, again, we may observe how widely moralists diverge in estimating the ethical value of Self-love. For Butler seems to regard it as one of two superior and naturally authoritative impulses.....

§ 3....(On p. 350.) And if it be said that the highest motive present, however feeble compared with others, should always prevail, and that we need only attend to that: then this mode of determining right conduct seems practically to pass over and resolve itself into some other method. For if several virtuous impulses, prompting to realize particular rules or qualities of conduct, are admitted as distinct and independent, these will naturally occupy the highest rank: and if not, then Rational Benevolence, or some similar principle, within the range of which all actions may be comprehended.... And thus our estimate of the value of all motives below the highest turns out to have little practical application, as the final decision as to the rightness of conduct will depend, after all, upon some quite different consideration.

CHAPTER XIII.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTUITIONISM.

§ 1.....

And this is to some extent the case. But Moral Philosophy, or Philosophy as applied to Morality, has had other tasks to occupy it, even more profoundly difficult than that of penetrating to the fundamental principles of Duty. In modern times especially, it has admitted the necessity of demonstrating the harmony of Duty with Interest; that is, with the Happiness or Good of the agent on whom the duty in each case is imposed. It has also undertaken to determine the relation of Right or Good generally to the world of actual existence; a task which could hardly be satisfactorily accomplished without an adequate explanation of the existence of Evil. It has further been distracted by psychological questions (of which, as I have before argued, the importance seems to have been much exaggerated) as to the 'innateness' of our notions of Duty, and the origin of the faculty that furnishes them. With their attention concentrated on these difficult subjects, each of which has been mixed up in various ways with the discussion of fundamental moral intuitions, philosophers have too easily been led to satisfy themselves with ethical formulæ which implicitly accept the morality of Common Sense *en bloc*, ignoring its defects; and merely express a certain view of the relation of this morality to the individual mind or to the universe of actual existence. Perhaps also they have been hampered.....

§ 2.....

The definitions quoted may be found in modern writers:

but it seems worthy of remark that throughout the ethical speculation of Greece[1], such universal affirmations as are presented to us concerning Virtue or Good conduct seem always to be propositions which can only be defended from the charge of tautology, if they are understood as definitions of the problem to be solved, and not as attempts at its solution. For example, we come to the study of Plato and Aristotle, expecting to find that they as constructive moralists have supplied the scientific knowledge on ethical matters of which Socrates proclaimed the absence; knowledge, that is, of the Good and Bad in human life.....

On the Stoic system[2], as constructed by Zeno and Chrysippus, it is perhaps unfair to pronounce decisively,.....bring us back into the original circle at a different point[3].....

I have before suggested that we are liable to slide into another logical circle if we refer to the Good or Perfection, whether of the agent or of others, in giving an account of any special virtue; unless we are careful, in explaining Good or Perfection, not to use the general notion of virtue (which has commonly been regarded as an important element of either). This point will call for special attention in the next chapter. Meanwhile I have already given, perhaps,

[1] I am fully sensible of the peculiar interest and value of the ethical thought of ancient Greece. Indeed through a large part of the present work the influence of Plato and Aristotle on my treatment of this subject has been greater than that of any modern writer. But I am here only considering the value of the general principles for determining what ought to be done, which the ancient systems profess to supply.

[2] The following remarks apply less to *later* Stoicism (which we know at first hand in the writings of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius) in proportion as the relation of the individual man to Humanity generally is more prominent in this than in the earlier form of the system.

[3] It should be observed that in determining the particulars of external duty the Stoics to some extent used the notion 'nature' in a different way: they tried to discover and realize the end or Design of the 'nature' or constitution of the particular things (especially human beings) that make up the Universe. But since in their view the whole course of the Universe was both perfect and completely predetermined, it was impossible for them to obtain from any observation of actual existence a clear and consistent principle for preferring and rejecting alternatives of conduct: and in fact their most characteristic practical precepts shew a curious collision between the tendency to accept what was customary as 'natural,' and the tendency to reject what seemed arbitrary as unreasonable.

more than sufficient illustration of one of the most important dangers that beset the student of Ethics. In the laudable attempt to escape from the doubtfulness, disputableness, and apparent arbitrariness of current moral opinions, he is liable to take refuge in principles that are incontrovertible but insignificant.

§ 3. Can we then, between this Scylla and Charybdis of ethical inquiry, avoiding on the one hand doctrines that merely bring us back to common opinion with all its imperfections, and on the other hand doctrines that lead us round in a circle, find any way of obtaining self-evident moral principles of real significance? It would be disheartening to have to regard as altogether illusory the strong instinct of Common Sense that points to the existence of such principles, and the deliberate convictions of the long line of moralists who have enunciated them. At the same time, the more we extend our knowledge of man and his environment, the more we realize the vast variety of human natures and circumstances that have existed in different ages and countries, the less disposed we are to believe that there is any definite code of absolute rules, applicable to all human beings without exception. And we shall find, I think, that the truth lies between these two conclusions. There are certain absolute practical principles, the truth of which, when they are explicitly stated, is manifest; but they are of too abstract a nature, and too universal in their scope, to enable us to ascertain by immediate application of them what we ought to do in any particular case; particular duties have still to be determined by some other method.

One such principle was given in c. 1, § 3 of this Book; where I pointed out that whatever action any of us judges to be right for himself, he implicitly judges to be right for all similar persons in similar circumstances. Or, as we may otherwise put it, 'if a kind of conduct that is right (or wrong) for me is not right (or wrong) for some one else, it must be on the ground of some difference between the two cases, other than the fact that I and he are different persons[1].' A corresponding proposition may be stated with equal truth in respect of what

[1] I may observe that in c. 7, § 3, I pointed out an important qualification of the practical effect of this rule.

ought to be done *to*—not *by*—different individuals. These principles have been most widely recognized, not in their most abstract and universal form, but in their special application to the mutual relations of two (or more) similarly situated individuals: as so applied, they appear in what is popularly known as the Golden Rule, 'Do to others as you would have them do to you.' This formula is obviously unprecise in statement; for one might wish for another's co-operation in sin, and be willing to reciprocate it. Nor is it even true to say that we ought to do to others only what we think it right for them to do to us; for no one will deny that there may be differences in the circumstances of two individuals, *A* and *B*, which would make it wrong for *A* to treat *B* in the way in which it is right for *B* to treat *A*. In short the rule strictly stated must take some such negative form as this; 'it cannot be right for *A* to treat *B* in a manner in which it would be wrong for *B* to treat *A*, unless we can find some difference between the natures or circumstances of the two which we can state as a reasonable ground for difference of treatment.' Such a principle manifestly does not give complete guidance; but its truth, as far as it goes, is self-evident; and Common Sense has amply recognized its practical importance.

Another commonly recognized application of the principle that individuals in similar circumstances should be treated similarly is found in the administration of Law, or (as we say) of 'Justice.' In § 2 of c. 5 of this Book I drew attention to this 'impartiality in the application of general rules,' as an important element in the common notion of Justice; indeed, there ultimately appeared to be no other element which could be intuitively known with perfect clearness and certainty. Here again it must be plain that this precept of impartiality is insufficient for the complete determination of just conduct, as it does not help us to decide what kind of rules should be thus impartially applied, though we shall of course admit the importance of excluding from government, and human conduct generally, all conscious partiality and 'respect of persons.'

The principles just discussed, each of which seems to be more or less clearly implied in the common notion of 'fairness' or 'equity,' are obtained by considering the similarity of the

individuals that make up a Logical Whole or Genus. There are others, no less important, which emerge in the consideration of the similar parts of a Mathematical or Quantitative Whole. Such a Whole is presented in the common notion of the Good—or, as is sometimes said, 'good on the whole'—of any individual human being. The proposition 'that one ought to aim at one's own good' is sometimes given as the maxim of Rational Self-love or Prudence. As so stated it may seem tautological; since we may define of 'good' as 'what one ought to aim at.' But if we say 'one's good on the whole,' the addition at least suggests a principle which, when explicitly stated, is not tautological; though, like those just discussed, it is merely negative and regulative. I have already referred to this principle as that of 'impartial concern for all parts of our conscious life.' We might give the precept most concisely by saying 'that Hereafter (as such) is to be regarded as much as Now[1]'; *i. e.* the mere difference of priority and posteriority in time is not a reasonable ground for having more regard to the consciousness of one moment than to that of another. The form in which it practically presents itself to most men is 'that a smaller present good is not to be preferred to a greater future good': since Prudence is generally exercised in restraining a present desire (the object or satisfaction of which we recognize as *pro tanto* 'a good'), on account of the remoter consequences of gratifying it. The commonest view of the principle would no doubt be that the present *pleasure* or *happiness* is reasonably to be foregone with the view of obtaining greater pleasure or happiness hereafter. But the principle need not be restricted to a hedonistic application: it is equally applicable to any other interpretation of 'one's own good,' in which good is conceived as a mathematical whole, of which the integrant parts are realized in different parts or moments of a lifetime. And therefore it is perhaps better to distinguish it here from the principle 'that Pleasure is the sole Ultimate Good,' which does not seem to have any logical connexion with it.

So far we have only been considering the 'good (or happi-

[1] It should be observed that we cannot say absolutely that all parts of our conscious life should be equally regarded; because it is possible that greater or more certain good may be realizable in some than in others.

ness) on the whole' of a single individual: but just as this notion is constructed by comparison and integration of the different 'goods' (or pleasures) that succeed one another in the series of our conscious states, so we have formed the notion of Universal Good (or Happiness) which includes the goods (or happinesses) of all individual human—or sentient—existences. And here again, just as in the former case, by considering the relation of the integrant parts to the whole and to each other, we may obtain the self-evident principle that the good of any one individual is of no more importance, as a part of universal good, than the good of any other; unless, that is, there are special grounds for believing that more good is likely to be realized in the one case than in the other. And as rational beings we are manifestly bound to aim at good generally, not merely at this or that part of it; we can only evade the conviction of this obligation by denying that there is any such universal good.

This, then, I hold to be the abstract principle of the duty of Benevolence, so far as it is cognizable by direct intuition; that one is morally bound to regard the good of any other individual as much as one's own, except in so far as it is less, or less certainly knowable or attainable. I before observed[1] that the duty of Benevolence as recognized by common sense seems to fall somewhat short of this. But I think it may be fairly urged as an explanation of this shortcoming that *practically* each man, even with a view to universal Good, ought chiefly to concern himself with promoting the good of a limited number of human beings, and that generally in proportion to the closeness of their connexion with him. I think that the plainest of 'plain men,' if his conscience were fairly brought to consider the hypothetical question, whether it would be right for him to seek his own happiness on any occasion if it involved a sacrifice of the greater happiness of some other human being, would answer unhesitatingly in the negative.

I have tried to shew how in the principles of Prudence, Justice and Rational Benevolence as commonly recognized there is at least a self-evident element, immediately cognizable by abstract intuition. I regard the apprehension, with more or

[1] c. 4, § 3.

less distinctness, of these abstract truths, as the permanent basis of the common conviction that the fundamental precepts of morality are essentially reasonable. No doubt by loose thinkers these principles are often placed side by side with other precepts to which custom and general consent have given a merely illusory air of self-evidence: but this seems to be less the case in proportion as a writer is in earnest in seeking among commonly received moral rules for genuine intuitions of the Practical Reason. For example, there is no English moralist who shews more earnestness of this sort than Clarke. Accordingly, we find that Clarke lays down, in respect of our behaviour towards our fellow-men, two fundamental "rules of righteousness:" the first of which he terms Equity, and the second Love or Benevolence. The Rule of Equity he states thus: "Whatever I judge reasonable or unreasonable that another should do for me: that by the same judgment I declare reasonable or unreasonable that I should *in the like case* do for him"—which is, of course, the 'Golden Rule' precisely stated. The obligation to "Universal Love or Benevolence" he exhibits as follows:—

"If there be a natural and necessary difference between Good and Evil: and that which is Good is fit and reasonable, and that which is Evil is unreasonable, to be done: and that which is the Greatest Good is always the most fit and reasonable to be chosen: then...every rational creature ought in its sphere and station, according to its respective powers and faculties, to do all the Good it can to its fellow-creatures: to which end, universal Love and Benevolence is plainly the most certain, direct, and effectual means."

Here the mere statement that a rational agent is bound to aim at universal good is open to the charge of tautology, since Clarke defines 'Good' as 'that which is fit and reasonable to be done.' But Clarke obviously holds that each individual creature is capable of receiving good in a greater or less degree, such good being an integrant part of universal good. This indeed is implied in the common notion, which he uses, of 'doing Good to one's fellow-creatures,' or, as he otherwise expresses it, 'promoting their welfare and happiness.' And thus his principle is implicitly what was stated above, that the

good, welfare, or happiness of any one individual cannot as such have more of the quality of good than the equal good of any other individual.

§ 4. Among modern moralists other than English, Kant would be generally admitted to have been especially careful and rigorous in separating the purely rational element of the moral code. Now we have already noticed that his fundamental principle of duty is the 'formal' rule of "acting on a maxim that one can will to be law universal"; which is the principle that I first noticed in the preceding section, thrown into an imperative and immediately practical form. And we find that when he comes to consider the ends at which virtuous action is aimed, the only really ultimate end which he lays down is the object of Rational Benevolence as commonly conceived—the happiness of other men[1]. Owing, however, to the error before pointed out of exaggerating the efficacy of his formal principle in determining right conduct, he makes an unsuccessful attempt to exhibit the duty of Benevolence as an immediate deduction from this formula.....

We observe, however, that by whatever arguments it is reached, Kant's conclusion is in substantial agreement with the view of the duty of Benevolence that I gave in the preceding section. He regards it as evident *à priori* that each rational agent is bound to aim at the happiness of all other rational beings no less than its own: nay, in his view, it can only be stated as a *duty* for me to seek my own happiness in so far as I consider it a part of Universal Happiness.

§ 5. Here then we have arrived, in our search for really clear and certain ethical intuitions, at the fundamental maxim of Utilitarianism. It must be admitted indeed that the thinkers who in recent times have taught the utilitarian system, have not usually tried to exhibit the truth of their first principle by means of the reasoning above given. Still, whenever they do offer anything like a proof of this principle, it seems to involve some such reasoning, or at least to be logically incomplete with-

[1] Kant no doubt gives the agent's own Perfection as another absolute end; but when we come to examine his notion of perfection, we find that it is not really determinate without the statement of other ends of reason, for the accomplishment of which we are to perfect ourselves.

out it. To illustrate this, let us consider the proof that Mill gives of the "principle of utility" in ch. 4 of his *Utilitarianism*[1].

...But the conclusion at which he actually arrives is that 'general happiness' is a "good to the aggregate"; and it can hardly be said to be an immediate inference from this that the individual ought to aim at realizing it. In fact there is a gap in the expressed argument, which must, I think, have been consciously or unconsciously filled in Mill's mind by what I have above tried to exhibit as the intuition of Rational Benevolence.

Utilitarianism thus appears as the final form into which a really scientific Intuitionism tends to pass. In order, however, to make this transition logically complete, we require to interpret 'Universal Good' into 'Universal Happiness.' And this interpretation cannot, in my view, be justified by arguing, as Mill does, from the psychological fact that Happiness is the sole object of men's actual desires, to the ethical conclusion that it alone is desirable or good: because in Book I. ch. 4 of this treatise I attempted to shew that Happiness or Pleasure is not the only object that each for himself actually desires. This conclusion is properly to be reached, I think, by a more indirect mode of reasoning; which I will endeavour to explain in the next Chapter.

[1] It has been suggested that I have overlooked a confusion in Mill's mind between two possible meanings of the term 'desirable,' (1) what can be desired and (2) what ought to be desired. I intended to shew by the two first sentences of this paragraph that I was aware of this confusion, but thought it unnecessary for my present purpose to discuss it.

CHAPTER XIV.

ULTIMATE GOOD.

§ 1. At the outset of this treatise[1] I noticed that there are two forms in which the object of ethical inquiry is considered; it is sometimes regarded as a Rule or Rules of Conduct, 'the Right,' sometimes as an end or ends, 'the Good.' Many moralists interpret one of these notions into the other, by saying either that the sole Good is the fulfilment of absolute Rules, or that the sole absolute Rule is the precept to 'aim at Good.' But it seems to me that in the moral view of modern Europe the two notions are *prima facie* distinct: since while it is thought that the obligation to obey moral rules is absolute, it is not commonly held that the whole Good of man lies in such obedience; this view, we may say, is respectfully repudiated as a Stoical paradox. The 'Summum Bonum' of man is rather regarded as an ulterior result, the connexion of which with his Right Conduct is indeed certain, but less cognizable by us than the Rightness of Conduct itself: in fact this connexion is frequently conceived as supernatural, and so beyond the range of independent ethical speculation. But now, if the conclusions of the preceding chapters are to be trusted, it would seem (1) that most of the commonly received maxims of Duty—even of those which at first sight appear absolute and independent—are found when closely examined to contain an implicit subordination to the more general principles of Prudence and Benevolence: and (2) that no principles except these can be admitted as at once intuitively clear and certain and complete as a direction

[1] Cf. Bk. I. c. 1, § 2.

for conduct[1]. While again these principles themselves, so far as they are immediately known by abstract intuition, can only be stated as precepts to seek (1) one's own good on the whole, and (2) the good of any other no less than one's own, in so far as it is no less an element of universal good. It appears then that we are after all brought round again to the old question with which ethical speculation in Europe began, 'What is the Ultimate Good for man?' When however we examine the controversies to which this question originally led, we see that the investigation which has brought us round to it has at any rate shewn us the necessity of excluding the chief answer that orthodox Greek moralists generally gave to it. It will not do for us to say that 'General Good' consists in general Virtue; that is, in the prescriptions and prohibitions that make up the morality of Common Sense. This would obviously involve us in a logical circle; if we are right in holding that the exact determination of these prescriptions and prohibitions must depend on the definition of this General Good.

It may be thought, perhaps, that this argument applies only to morality considered as a code of rules; and that it may be evaded by adopting the view of what I have called 'Æsthetic Intuitionism' and regarding Virtues as excellences of conduct clearly discernible by trained insight, although their nature does not admit of being stated in definite formulæ. But it will be seen on closer inspection that our notions of special virtues do not really become more independent by becoming more indefinite: they still contain, though perhaps more latently, the same reference to 'Good' or 'Wellbeing' as an ultimate standard. This appears clearly when we consider any virtue in relation to the cognate vice—or at least *non-virtue*—into which it tends to pass over when pushed to an extreme, or exhibited under inappropriate conditions. For example, Common Sense may seem to regard Liberality, Frugality, Courage, Placability as intrinsically desirable: but when we consider their relation respectively to Profusion, Meanness, Foolhardiness, Weakness, we find that Common Sense draws

[1] Kant's formal principle, and its application in the Rule of Equity, were seen to be obviously incomplete as directing conduct.

the line in each case not by immediate intuition, but by reference either to some definite maxim of duty, or to the general notion of 'Good' or Wellbeing: and similarly when we ask at what point Candour, Generosity, Humility, cease to be virtues by becoming 'excessive.' Other qualities commonly admired such as Energy, Zeal, Self-control, Thoughtfulness are obviously regarded as Virtues only when they are directed to good ends. In short, the only so-called Virtues which can be thought to be essentially and always such, and incapable of excess, are such qualities as Wisdom, Universal Benevolence, and perhaps Justice; of which the notions manifestly involve this notion of Good, supposed already determinate. Wisdom is insight into Good and the means to Good; Benevolence is exhibited in doing Good: Justice (when so regarded) lies in distributing Good (or evil) impartially according to right rules. If then we are asked what is this Good which it is excellent to know, to bestow on others, to distribute impartially, it would be absurd to reply that it is just this knowledge, this beneficent impulse, this impartial distribution. Thus however practically important Virtue may be, however prominent it may properly be made in a popular description of the Good or Desirable life, we cannot, without manifest divergence from Common Sense, introduce it in a scientific explanation of the nature of Ultimate Good.

And if this be true of Virtue, it seems to be yet more evidently true of most of the other graces and gifts, bodily or mental, which make up the common notion of human Excellence or Perfection. Although the goodness of such gifts and skills may be recognized and admired instinctively, reflection shews us that they are conceived as essentially relative to some Good which they contribute to produce and maintain.

Shall we then fall back on the other answer which Greek speculation brought out in continually sharper antithesis to the view that Ultimate Good was Virtue; and say that it is Pleasure or Happiness? Perhaps the majority of mankind would affirm this without hesitation; and accordingly in my examination of the common rules of morality I have sometimes stated 'general happiness' as the end or standard to which the

rule was found implicitly to refer[1]. But more often it has seemed to me more correct to give the reference vaguely to 'good' (or sometimes 'expediency') or wellbeing; recognizing that there are many persons who are not prepared to interpret these wider notions in terms of Pleasure. What then can we say of Good or Wellbeing, if we are not to say that it is Virtue, nor yet that it is Happiness?

This question was discussed to some extent in c. 9 of Book I. It there appeared that we could not, on reflection, maintain anything to be intrinsically and ultimately good, except in so far as it entered into relation to consciousness of some kind and rendered that good and desirable: and thus that the only ultimate Good, or End in itself, must be Goodness or Excellence of Conscious Life.

When, however, we have so far limited the application of the notion Good to conscious life, it may seem that our result is really identical with what we call Happiness: that to say that all other things called good are only means to the end of making conscious life intrinsically better or more desirable, is in fact saying that they are means to the end of happiness. On the other hand it seems clear that in ordinary thought consciousness[2], active and passive, is conceived to be preferable on other grounds than its pleasantness. The explanation seems to be (as was suggested in Book II. c. 2, § 2) that when we judge one

[1] I have done this (*e.g.*) in the case of Benevolence; and elsewhere where *pain* or *pleasure* of any kind seemed clearly to come within the purview of Common Sense.

[2] I have used the term "consciousness" rather than "feeling" throughout the present section, to denote the genus of which pleasure and pain are species; because the reader's attention is being directed to Cognitions and Volitions, and many psychologists would not consider these as different, though inseparable, from Feelings. But no one, I think, will maintain that the element of consciousness denoted by the term 'Cognition' in so far as it can be distinguished on the one hand from the accompanying feeling, and on the other hand from the objective relation of the knowing mind to the object known (which is also implied in the term 'cognition'), is intrinsically desirable, or the reverse: and similarly of Volition. Hence in Bk. II. I did not hesitate to define pleasure as a kind of Feeling. If however any one were to affirm that cognitive or active consciousness, regarded as consciousness, and distinguished from feeling, is intrinsically desirable, we should say that such consciousness was for him a pleasure and modify our definition accordingly.

kind of consciousness to be more pleasant than another, we judge it to be preferable considered merely as consciousness, without taking into account the conditions under which it occurs; but when we judge it to be better though less pleasant, what we really prefer is no longer the consciousness itself, but something in its conditions, concomitants or consequences.

We may illustrate this by reference to some of those ideal objects, for the sake of which it is sometimes thought that a rational being ought to sacrifice human happiness. We may prefer... ...elevated exercise of taste.

§ 2. If such objects, then, as Truth, Freedom, Beauty, &c., or, strictly speaking, the objective relations of conscious minds which we call cognition of Truth, contemplation of Beauty, Independence of action, &c., are Good, independently of the pleasures that we derive from them, it must be reasonable to aim at these for mankind generally and not as happiness only: and so the principle of Rational Benevolence, which was stated in the last chapter as an indubitable intuition of the practical Reason, does not seem to direct us to the pursuit of universal happiness alone, but of these other ends as well. And this view though not, I think, the prevailing one, is at any rate widely accepted among cultivated persons.

On reflection, however, I think this will appear to be an unsound view. In order to shew this, I must ask the reader to use the same twofold procedure that I before requested him to employ in considering the absolute and independent validity of common moral precepts. I appeal firstly to his intuitive judgment after due consideration of the question when fairly placed before it: and secondly to a comprehensive comparison of the ordinary judgments of mankind. As regards the first argument, to me at least it seems clear that these objective relations of the conscious subject, when distinguished in reflective analysis from the consciousness accompanying and resulting from them, are not ultimately and intrinsically desirable: any more than material or other objects are, when considered out of relation to conscious existence altogether. Admitting that we have actual experience of such preferences as have just been described, of which the ultimate object is something that is not merely consciousness: it still seems to me that when (to use Butler's phrase)

we "sit down in a calm moment," we can only justify to ourselves the importance that we attach to any of these objects by considering its conduciveness, in one way or another, to the happiness of conscious (or sentient) beings.

The second argument, that refers to the common sense of mankind, obviously cannot be made completely cogent; since, as above stated, several cultivated persons do habitually judge that knowledge, art, &c., are ends independently of the pleasure derived from them. But we may urge not only that all these elements of "ideal good" are productive of pleasure in various ways; but also that they seem to obtain the commendation of Common Sense, roughly speaking, in proportion to the degree of this productiveness. This seems obviously true of Beauty; and will hardly be denied in respect of any kind of social ideal: it is paradoxical to maintain that any degree of Freedom, or any form of social order, would still be commonly regarded as desirable even if we were certain that it had no tendency to promote the general happiness. The case of Knowledge is rather more complex; but certainly Common Sense is most impressed with the value of knowledge, when its 'fruitfulness' has been demonstrated. It is, however, aware that experience has frequently shewn how knowledge, long fruitless, may become unexpectedly fruitful, and how light may be shed on one part of the field of knowledge from another apparently remote: and even if any particular branch of scientific pursuit could be shewn to be devoid of even this indirect utility, it would still deserve some respect on utilitarian grounds; both as furnishing to the inquirer the refined and innocent pleasures of curiosity, and because the intellectual disposition which it exhibits and sustains, is likely on the whole to produce fruitful knowledge. Still in cases approximating to this latter, Common Sense is somewhat disposed to complain of the misdirection of valuable effort; so that the meed of honour commonly paid to Science seems to be graduated, though perhaps unconsciously, by a tolerably exact utilitarian scale. Certainly the moment the legitimacy of any branch of scientific inquiry is seriously disputed, as in the recent case of vivisection, the controversy on both sides is generally conducted on an avowedly utilitarian basis.

At the same time it must be allowed...(on p. 374)...between

the two kinds of reasonableness. But when 'Reasonable Self-love' has been clearly distinguished from Conscience, as it is by Butler and his followers, we find it is naturally understood to mean desire for one's own Happiness: so that in fact the interpretation of 'one's own good,' which was almost peculiar in ancient thought to the Cyrenaic and Epicurean heresies, is adopted by some of the most orthodox of modern moralists. Indeed it often does not seem to have occurred to these latter that this notion can have any other interpretation[1]. If then, when any one hypothetically concentrates his attention on himself, Good is naturally and almost inevitably conceived to be Pleasure, we shall hardly conclude that the Good of any number of similar beings, whatever their mutual relations may be, can be something essentially different in quality....

Thus, then, we are finally led to the conclusion (which at the close of the last chapter seemed to be premature) that the Intuitional method rigorously applied yields as its final result the doctrine of pure Universalistic Hedonism[2].

§ 3. If, however, this view be rejected, it remains to consider whether we can frame any other coherent account of Ultimate Good. If we are not to systematize human activities by taking Universal Happiness as their common end, on what other principles are we to systematize them? It should be observed that these principles must not only enable us to compare among themselves the values of the different non-hedonis-

[1] Cf. Stewart, *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers*, Bk. II. c. 1.

[2] I have before noticed (Bk. II. c. 3, note) the metaphysical objection taken by certain writers to the view that Happiness is Ultimate Good; on the ground that Happiness (= sum of pleasures) can only be realized in successive parts, whereas a "Chief Good" must be "something of which some being can be conceived in possession"—something, that is, which he can have all at once. On considering this objection it seemed to me that, in so far as it is even plausible, its plausibility depends on the exact form of the notion 'a Chief Good'. (or 'Summum Bonum'), which is perhaps inappropriate as applied to Happiness. I have therefore in this chapter used the notion of 'Ultimate Good': as I can see no shadow of reason for affirming that that which is Good or Desirable *per se*, and not as a means to some further end, must *necessarily* be something capable of being possessed all at once. I can understand that a man may aspire after a Good of this latter kind: but so long as Time is a necessary form of human existence, it can hardly be surprising that human good should be subject to the condition of being realized in successive parts.

tic ends which we have been considering, but must also provide a common standard for comparing these values with that of Happiness; unless we are prepared to adopt the paradoxical position of rejecting happiness as absolutely valueless. For we have a practical need of determining not only whether we should pursue Truth rather than Beauty, or Freedom or some ideal constitution of society rather than either, or perhaps desert all of these for the life of worship and religious contemplation; but also how far we should follow any of these lines of endeavour, when we foresee among its consequences the pains of human or other sentient beings, or even the loss of pleasures that might otherwise have been enjoyed by them[1].

The former of these problems is sometimes evaded by saying that each man has his own special gifts and capabilities, and must cultivate and develope these, and so attain each his own perfection. But it has been already seen[2] that there is, as far as we can ascertain, no such definite original constitution in each human being as this seems to imply. Human nature is a raw material, varying no doubt from individual to individual, and less modifiable in some than in others; but in all cases apparently capable of being moulded into an indefinite number of different shapes according to different patterns. We may admit that the reasonable pattern for each individual varies somewhat according to the variation of the material: but we must at any rate think that it varies on grounds intrinsically universal, so that all the various results are deducible from some universal principles that all ought to accept. We are thus led back to the question, What are these principles?

I have failed to find any serious and systematic attempt to answer this question: and hence I am unable to develope the ethical method which takes Ultimate Good to consist in Perfection of life, as distinct from Happiness; whether this Perfection be sought for the individual agent, or for mankind or the universe. But before I conclude I should notice a view of the Well-

[1] The controversy on vivisection, to which I referred just now, affords a good illustration of the need that I am pointing out. I do not observe that any one in this controversy has ventured on the paradox that the pain of sentient beings is not *per se* to be avoided.

[2] B. II. c. 5.

being or Welfare of living things, suggested by current zoological conception and apparently maintained with more or less definiteness by influential living writers; which, if it could be accepted, might enable us to get rid summarily of all the difficulties involved in the investigation of Ultimate Good. On this view, when we attribute 'goodness' or 'badness' to the manner of existence of any living organism, we should be understood to attribute to it a tendency either (1) to self-preservation or (2) to the preservation of the community or race to which it belongs. What 'Wellbeing' in short adds to mere Being is the promise of future being. I have drawn attention to this view because there appears to me to be an important element of truth in it, which is sometimes overlooked in the Utilitarian explanation and synthesis of morality. Living somehow is an indispensable condition of living well; and we shall all agree that men cannot live well except they live as members of an organized society: and accordingly we may admit that a most fundamentally important part of the function of morality consists in maintaining such habits and sentiments as are necessary to the continual existence, in full numbers, of a society of human beings under actual circumstances. But it is another thing to say that supposing a perpetuity of existence secured for a community or race of living things, there is nothing more to be reasonably desired for it: indeed if we consider the assertion as made with regard to our own society or race, it seems unnecessary to prove that the mere maintenance of preservative habits and sentiments does not exhaust our notion of Good or Desirable life.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEANING OF UTILITARIANISM.

By Utilitarianism is here meant the ethical theory, first distinctly formulated by Bentham, that the conduct which, under any given circumstances, is externally or objectively right, is that which will produce the greatest amount of happiness on the whole...[1]

...In all such cases, therefore, it becomes practically important to ask whether any mode of distributing happiness is better than any other. Now the Utilitarian formula seems to supply no answer to this question: at least we have to supplement the principle of seeking the greatest happiness on the whole by some principle of Just or Right distribution of this happiness. The principle which most Utilitarians have either tacitly or expressly adopted is that of pure equality: as given in Bentham's formula, "everybody to count for one, and nobody for more than one." And this principle is obviously the simplest, and the only one which does not need a special justification: for, as we saw, it must be reasonable to treat any one man in the same way as any other, if there be no reason apparent for treating him differently[2].

[1] I have substituted this phrase in this edition for 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'; and made corresponding changes throughout the chapter.

[2] It should be observed that the question here is as to the distribution of *Happiness*, not the *means of happiness*.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROOF OF UTILITARIANISM.

In Book II., where we discussed the method of Egoistic Hedonism, we did not take occasion to examine any proof of its first principle: nor, again, in examining Intuitionism, did we demand demonstration of the principles put forward as intuitively known: but only inquired whether they possessed the characteristics which seem to be indispensable in the premises or axioms of a scientific method. In the case of Universalistic Hedonism also, what chiefly concerns us is not how its principle is to be proved to those who do not accept it, but what consequences are logically involved in its acceptance. At the same time it is important to observe that while the principle of Egoism is unquestioningly accepted by the majority of minds, and that of Intuitionism is at least openly challenged by few; Utilitarianism is generally felt to require some proof, or at least (as Mill puts it) some "considerations determining the mind to accept it." Few minds are prepared to admit as self-evident that one ought to aim at happiness universally; while the propositions 'that it is reasonable to seek one's own happiness,' and 'that it is reasonable to obey the established rules of morality,' would very frequently be allowed to pass without question.....

It undoubtedly seems to Common Sense paradoxical to ask for a reason why one should seek one's own happiness. That one ought to obey the commonly received rules of morality is perhaps not held to be quite equally obvious. Indeed probably no thoughtful person would maintain the proposition so stated to be axiomatic: and we find that reasons are continually given for this and that particular moral maxim. Still the fact

that certain rules are commonly received as binding renders it generally unnecessary to prove their authority to the Common Sense that receives them: while for the same reason a Utilitarian who claims to supersede them by a higher principle is naturally challenged to demonstrate the legitimacy of his claim. To this challenge Utilitarians often reply by saying that it is impossible to "prove" a first principle.....

If the Egoist strictly confines himself to stating his conviction that he ought to take his own happiness or pleasure as his ultimate end, there seems no opening for any line of reasoning to lead him to Universalistic Hedonism as a first principle[1].... When, however, the Egoist offers, either as a reason for his Egoistic principle, or as another form of stating it, the proposition that his happiness or pleasure is Good, not only *for him* but absolutely; he gives the ground needed for such a proof. For we can then point out to him that *his* happiness cannot be a more important part of Good, taken universally, than the equal happiness of any other person. And thus, starting with his own principle, he must accept the wider notion of Universal happiness or pleasure as representing the real end of Reason, the absolutely Good or Desirable: as the end, therefore, to which the action of a reasonable agent as such ought to be directed.

This, it will be remembered, is the reasoning that I used in ch. 13 of the preceding book in exhibiting the principle of Rational Benevolence as one of the few Intuitions which stand the test of rigorous criticism.

(Conclusion.)...the proof of Utilitarianism will be probably as complete as it can be made. And since it is of the utmost importance in considering the method of Utilitarianism to determine exactly its relation to the commonly received rules of morality; it will be convenient to examine this relation at some length in the following chapter.

[1] It is to be observed that he may be led to it in other ways than that of argument: *i. e.* by appeals to his sympathies, or to his moral or quasi-moral sentiments.

CHAPTER III.

RELATION OF UTILITARIANISM TO THE MORALITY OF COMMON SENSE.

§ 1.....

(On p. 395.)...That the right action is under all circumstances that which will produce the greatest possible happiness on the whole. But it must be borne in mind that Utilitarianism is not concerned to prove the absolute coincidence in results of the Intuitional and Utilitarian methods. Indeed, if it could succeed in proving as much as this, its success would be in a manner suicidal, as it would then be practically indifferent whether we did or did not adopt the Utilitarian principle.

(On p. 400.)...In order, however, to form a precise estimate of the extent to which Utilitarianism agrees or disagrees with Common Sense, it seems best to examine the more definite judgments of right and wrong in conduct, rather than the vaguer awards of praise and admiration to dispositions. But before we proceed, with this object, to discuss notions of virtue and duty, it should be observed that there are some among these notions, the examination of which cannot really affect our decision of the present question: since their definitions inevitably involve, in some manner or other, the notion of 'good' or 'right' supposed already determinate....

And, for a similar reason, we need not specially examine another large class of virtues, which, as commonly formulated, do not seem to refer explicitly to any higher principle: but in which, nevertheless, reflection forces us to suppose such a reference, if we would make their maxims sufficiently precise to guide conduct. For such reference must be either under-

stood to be made directly to general happiness or wellbeing; or else to some other definite rule of duty, taken as absolute: if then all such apparently definite and ultimate rules can be shewn to have a latent Utilitarian basis, it seems evident that a similar result may be taken as admitted for all derivative and less definite maxims.

(On p. 412.)..."salus populi suprema lex."

These and similar common opinions seem at least to suggest that the limits of the duty of Law-observance are to be determined by Utilitarian considerations. While, again, the Utilitarian view gets rid...

...(On p. 421.) The offence is commonly more deliberate in the man, who has the additional guilt of soliciting and persuading the woman; in the latter, again, it is far more often prompted by some motive that we rank higher than mere lust: so that, according to the ordinary canons of Intuitional Morality, it ought to be more severely condemned in the man.....

CHAPTERS IV, V.

THE METHOD OF UTILITARIANISM.

§ 1. If the view maintained in the preceding chapter as to the general Utilitarian basis of the Morality of Common Sense may be regarded as sufficiently established, we are now in a position to consider more closely to what method of determining right conduct the acceptance of Utilitarianism will practically lead.....

...From the considerations that we have just surveyed it is but a short and easy step to the conclusion that in the morality of Common Sense we have ready to hand a body of Utilitarian doctrine: so that, in Baconian phrase, the principles of Common Sense may be regarded as the "middle axioms" of Utilitarianism....

Nor does the case seem to be materially altered even by the complete acceptance of the hypothesis, now very prevalent among naturalists and sociologists, that the moral sense is entirely derived from experiences of pleasure and pain. The hypothesis, in its completest form, would seem to be this; that the experience of each member of the human community impresses itself on the consciousness of others, partly by their direct sympathy with his pleasures and pains, and partly through their regard for his gratitude and resentment, goodwill and hatred, and their consequences; that these impressions are retained and accumulated, and confirmed and kept from divergence by the mutual sympathy of all; that their effects are transmitted from generation to generation, partly by physical inheritance, and partly by tradition from parents to children, and imitation of adults by the young; and that

thus common likings or (aversions) for conduct that affects pleasurably (or painfully) the community generally or some part of it, are gradually developed, till they become what we now know as the moral sentiments. That this hypothesis represents a true, if not a complete, cause appears to me nearly certain; and I regard it as furnishing a valuable supplement to the arguments of the preceding chapter that tend to exhibit the morality of common sense as unconsciously or 'instinctively' utilitarian. I think, however, that in a complete view of the development of the moral sense a more prominent place should be given to the effect of sympathy with the impulses that prompt to actions, as well as with the feelings that result from them.....

...(On pp. 433—434.) It has already been observed that whenever such divergent opinions are entertained by a minority so large, that we cannot fairly regard the dogma of the majority as the plain utterance of Common Sense, an appeal is necessarily made to some higher principle, and very commonly to Utilitarianism.

...(On p. 441.)...there are, as we saw, other ends besides Happiness, such as Knowledge, Beauty, &c., commonly recognized as *per se* desirable: but when the pursuit of any of these ends involves an apparent sacrifice of happiness in other ways (as in the case of physiological researches, where knowledge cannot be attained without causing pain, or as when it is proposed to support Art or Science out of the taxes), the practical question whether such pursuit ought to be allowed or maintained under the circumstances in question, seems always decided by an application, however rough, of the method of pure empirical Hedonism.

...(On p. 442.) The particulars of this criticism will obviously vary with the almost infinite variations in human nature and circumstances: a detailed Utilitarian casuistry would be a manifest absurdity. We have here only to discuss the general points of view which a Utilitarian critic must take, in order

(Note to p. 439.) At the same time this sentiment, which Kant among others has expressed with peculiar force (*Kritik der prakt. Vern.* Beschluss), is in no way incompatible with Utilitarianism; only it must not attach itself to any subordinate rules of conduct.

that no important class of relevant considerations may be omitted.

...(On p. 450.) Here, however, we seem brought into conflict with Kant's fundamental principle, that a right action must be one of which the agent could "will the maxim to be law universal": and yet this was accepted as a self-evident truth. But, as was before noticed in the particular case of veracity, we must admit an application of this principle, which importantly modifies its practical force: we must admit the case where the belief that the action will not be widely imitated is an essential qualification of the maxim. In fact, the Kantian principle means no more than that an act, if right for me, must be right on general grounds and therefore for some class of persons; but it gives no reason why this class should not be defined by the above-mentioned characteristic of believing that the act will remain an exceptional one.....

...(On p. 456.)...The 'social sanction' would be less effective if it became purely penal. Indeed, since the pains of remorse and disapprobation are in themselves to be avoided, it is plain that the Utilitarian construction of a Jural morality is essentially self-limiting; that is, it prescribes its own avoidance of any department of conduct in which the addition that can be made to happiness through the enforcement of rules sustained by social penalties appears doubtful or inconsiderable. In such departments, however, the æsthetic phase of morality may still reasonably find a place; we may properly admire and praise where it would be inexpedient to judge and condemn. We may conclude, then, that it is reasonable for a Utilitarian to praise any conduct more felicific in its tendency than what an average man would do under the given circumstances. .....

CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

THE MUTUAL RELATIONS OF THE THREE METHODS.

§ 1. In the greater part of the treatise of which the final chapter has now been reached, we have been employed in examining three methods of determining right conduct, which are for the most part found more or less vaguely combined in the practical reasonings of ordinary men, but which it has been my aim to develope as separately as possible. To attempt a complete synthesis of these different methods does not fall within the scope of the present work: at the same time it would hardly be satisfactory to conclude our analysis of them without discussing their mutual relations. Indeed we have already found it expedient to do this to a considerable extent, in the course of our examination of the separate methods. Thus in ch. 5 of B. II. we considered the relation of Egoism to those commonly-received rules of social behaviour, which the Intuitional method either accepts as self-evident principles or exhibits as immediate deductions from such principles. So, again, in the present and preceding books we have directly or indirectly gone through a pretty full examination of the mutual relations of the Intuitional and Utilitarian methods. The results of this examination may be conveniently stated here in a succinct form. We have found that the common antithesis between Intuitionists and Utilitarians must be entirely discarded: since such abstract moral principles as we can admit to be really self-evident are not only not incompatible with a Utilitarian system, but even seem required to furnish a rational basis for such a system. Thus we have seen that the essence of Justice or Equity, (in so far as it is clear and certain,) is that different

individuals are not to be treated differently, except on grounds of universal application: which grounds, again, are given in the principle of Universal Benevolence, that sets before each man the happiness of all others as an object of pursuit no less worthy than his own; while, again, other time-honoured virtues seem to be fitly explained as special manifestations of impartial benevolence under various normal circumstances of human life, or else as habits and dispositions indispensable to the maintenance of prudent or beneficent behaviour under the seductive force of various non-rational impulses. And although there are other rules which our common moral sense when first interrogated seems to enunciate as absolutely binding; it has appeared that careful and systematic reflection on this very Common Sense, as expressed in the habitual moral judgments of ordinary men, results in exhibiting the real subordination of these rules to the fundamental principles above given. Then, further, this method of systematising particular virtues and duties receives very strong support from a comparative study of the history of morality; as the variations in the moral code of different societies at different stages correspond, at least generally, to differences in the actual or believed tendencies of certain kinds of conduct to promote the good of society. While, again, the account given by our evolutionists of the pre-historic condition of the moral faculty, which represents it as derived aboriginally from the social instincts, is entirely in harmony with this view. No doubt, even if this synthesis of methods be completely accepted, there will remain some discrepancy in details between our particular moral sentiments and spontaneous judgments on the one hand, and the apparent results of special utilitarian calculations on the other; and we may often have some practical difficulty in weighing the latter against the more general utilitarian reasons for obeying the former: but there can be no longer any theoretical perplexity as to the principles for determining social duty.

It remains for us to consider the relation of the two species of Hedonism which we have distinguished as Universalistic and Egoistic. In ch. 2 of this book we have discussed the rational process (called by a stretch of language 'proof') by which one who holds it reasonable to aim at his own greatest happiness

may be determined to take Universal Happiness instead, as his ultimate standard of right conduct. We have seen, however, that the Egoist may avoid the application of this process: and it may be observed that Utilitarians generally, however anxious they have been to convince men of the reasonableness of aiming at happiness generally, have not commonly sought to attain this result by any logical transition from the Egoistic to the Universalistic principle. They have relied almost entirely on the Sanctions of Utilitarian rules; that is, on the pleasures gained or pains avoided by the individual conforming to them. And indeed if an Egoist remains impervious to what we have called Proof, the only way of rationally inducing him to aim at the happiness of all, is to shew him that his own greatest happiness can be best attained by so doing. It thus becomes needful to examine how far this demonstration can be effected.

...(On p. 470.)...In order fairly to perform this examination, let us reflect upon the clearest and most certain of our moral intuitions. I find that I undoubtedly seem to perceive, as clearly and certainly as I see any axiom in Arithmetic or Geometry, that it is 'right' and 'reasonable,' for me to treat others as I should think that I myself ought to be treated under similar conditions, and to do what I believe to be ultimately conducive to universal Good or Happiness. But I cannot find inseparably connected with this conviction, and similarly attainable by mere reflective intuition, any cognition that there actually is a Supreme Being who will adequately[1] reward me for obeying these rules of duty, or punish me for violating them..

...(Conclusion.) But it must be urged again that we do not fully conceive the argument in favour of the assumption that we are now considering, if we merely represent this as satisfying certain Desires. We have rather to regard it as an hypothesis logically necessary to avoid a fundamental contradiction in one chief department of our thought. Whether this necessity constitutes a sufficient reason for accepting the hypothesis, is a question which I cannot here attempt ade-

[1] It may be well to remind the reader that by 'adequate' is here meant 'sufficient to make it the agent's interest to promote universal good;' not necessarily 'proportioned to Desert.'

quately to discuss; as it could not be satisfactorily answered, without a general examination of the criteria of true and false beliefs. If we find that in other departments of our supposed knowledge propositions are commonly taken to be true, which yet seem to rest on no other grounds than that we have a strong disposition to accept them, and that they are indispensable to the systematic coherence of our beliefs; it will be difficult to reject a similarly supported assumption in ethics, without opening the door to universal scepticism. If on the other hand it appears that the edifice of physical science is really constructed of conclusions logically inferred from premises intuitively known; it will be reasonable to demand that our practical judgments should either be based on an equally firm foundation or should abandon all claim to philosophic certainty.

THE END.

CAMBRIDGE: PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A. AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

00101372

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018